TAKING PART

Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance

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Executive Summary

Muslims have become increasingly politically visible in recent years, with intense public and media debates on Muslim identities, allegiances, rights, claims-making and the place of Muslims and Islam within the West. As this report highlights, the current political visibility of Muslims in the UK has also been an outcome of *Muslim activism* – in lobbying for state recognition of Muslim distinctiveness and seeking inclusion within governance – as well as significant *institutional innovation* in the ways in which government has recognised and engaged with Muslims since the late 1990s.

This report presents the results of the *Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance* project, organised into key research themes.

1. General

Security concerns, and the Prevent agenda in particular, have had a significant impact on the ways in which government engages with Muslims. But, the state's engagement with Muslims cannot simply be reduced to security concerns. Indeed significant engagement with Muslims in relation to equality and recognition of religious difference, and in patterns of partnering with faith groups, preceded Prevent. A complete understanding of Muslim relationships with government should take account of engagement across policy domains, particularly in relation to equalities and the faith sector as well as security.

Muslims have become increasingly active and effective *within* governance, having an influence on decision-making and policy implementation.

There has been a high degree of local variation in how central government programmes relating to Muslims – such as Prevent or community cohesion – have been received and implemented in local contexts.

2. Civil Society & Representation

The representation of British Muslims in governance has passed through various phases. There has been a pluralisation away from a single or small number of representative organisations, and a reliance on a 'take me to your leader' approach, towards a more complex 'democratic constellation' of representation, which should be welcomed.

Criticisms levelled against Muslim umbrella bodies have centred on their inability to represent all Muslims, due to their ethnic and theological diversity. Yet leaders of Muslim umbrella bodies do not see representation in this way and do not claim to represent all Muslims at all times, speaking more often in terms of common interests that unite Muslims. There is a need to focus on the representativeness of claims, not of claims-makers.

Muslims have made the greatest advances around common interests when they have been unified (e.g., equalities legislation and the Religion question on the Census). There is a perception that on common concerns such as Islamophobia, a fragmentation into various competing approaches could undermine the potential for success.

3. Equalities, Diversity & Cohesion

Muslim participation in governance has been significant in driving an increased recognition of religious, as distinct from racial or ethnic, differences and disadvantages within equalities discourses and policies. Partly as a result of Muslim equalities advocacy, the UK government has moved from denying the existence of religious discrimination to introducing the strongest legislation on the offence in Europe.

Muslims have pursued equality within shared national and civic terms. Surveys consistently

show that British Muslims are more likely to identify with Britishness than white Britons. Yet even Muslim governance actors who identify with and contribute substantially to British public life can feel shut out by ethnic and cultural assumptions often made about British identity.

Whilst advances in equalities legislation have been substantial, Muslims' campaigning has had less impact on public narratives on Muslims, and Muslim actors have been unable to create effective coherent counter-narratives. Thus, substantive policy gains have been achieved at the same time as symbolic politics of public discourses on Muslims have worsened.

Although Prime Minister David Cameron has spoken forcefully against 'state multiculturalism,' some government policies may help cultivate multiculturalism in certain contexts. For example, more than 1/4 of the government's new academies are faith schools, giving rise to a, perhaps unintended, and in all likelihood uneven multiculturalism, in which groups can draw on state funding, albeit in a devolved, ad hoc manner.

4. The Faith Sector

New Labour *did* 'do God', despite Alastair Campbell's well-known protestation to the contrary. In thirteen years in power, New Labour engaged with faith more extensively and self-consciously than any previous modern British government including its work to incorporate faith leaders in local governance, and in advances in religion-related equalities legislation.

There is much continuity in the Conservative-led coalition government's attempts to take faith seriously. However, the coalition is distinctive from New Labour in its embrace of the narrative that Britain is a 'Christian country', where New Labour emphasised the multi-faith nature of contemporary Britain.

The Near Neighbours programme has brought to the fore the distinctive status afforded to the Church of England as a broker between government and other religious groups. The success or failure of Near Neighbours will be judged in large part on how well religious inclusivity is achieved. The role of a key religious institution in administering the programme is nevertheless welcomed by many – including many Muslim governance actors.

Muslims are allies with other faith actors, including the Church of England, in supporting a religious presence in governance and public life.

5. Participation and Prevent

Prevent is a key policy area in which state engagement with Muslims has taken place. It has been widely criticised, with a key charge that it has securitised the state's engagement with Muslims. Nevertheless, the portrait of Prevent as a highly top-down, securitised and disciplinary model of state engagement with Muslims presents only a partial account of the ways in which Prevent operated in practice

There was considerable variation in the ways in which Prevent was both conceived and implemented across three dimensions: firstly, different government departments operated with different understandings of Prevent; secondly, there was considerable variation in the ways in which Prevent was implemented at local level; thirdly, Muslim civil society actors were not merely subject to the Prevent agenda, but were actively involved in (re)shaping and contesting the implementation of Prevent.

Under both New Labour and Coalition governments, practices on the ground often diverge from centrally determined approaches, and we find evidence of both local authority and Muslim civil society agency operating in ways to re-shape Prevent.

This has implications for how some key aspects of the current Prevent strategy will be implemented – particularly in relation to the separation between Prevent and cohesion and integration work, and in the stance of governance actors on working with 'moderates' and 'extremists'.

1

Introduction

Over the last two decades, Muslims have become increasingly politically visible. This in part reflects shifts that have taken place since the late 1980s, as a consequence of the Rushdie affair, the end of the Cold War and, especially, since 9-11. Such visibility has entailed increasing focus on the place of Muslims and Islam within the West, reflected in (often fraught) public and media debates on Muslim identities, allegiances, rights and claims-making. Thus, across several European states, there have been intense debates on issues of integration, the accommodation of Muslim difference in the public domain (such as in relation to whether Muslim women should be permitted to wear hijab or niqab in public spaces), or in relation to security and violent political extremism: and this has also been the case in the UK. But, as this report highlights, the current political visibility of Muslims in the UK has also been an outcome of *Muslim activism* – in lobbying for state recognition of Muslim distinctiveness and seeking inclusion within governance – as well as significant *institutional innovation* in the ways in which government has recognised and engaged with Muslims since the late 1990s.

In terms of presence, voice and impact, there have been some very significant developments in Muslim participation in governance over the last two decades. For instance, there has been a slow but increasing presence of Muslim actors within political institutions. Following the election of Britain's first Muslim MP in 1997 – Mohammad Sarwar – the number of Muslim MPs in the House of Commons increased to eight following the 2010 General Election, which also marked the election of Britain's first three female Muslim MPs[1] and first two Conservative Muslim MPs.[2] Such advances are also reflected In the House of Lords, in local councils, the civil service and, as our report documents, in the increasing prominence of Muslim advisors and community activists in influencing policy nationally and locally. There have been a variety of issues on which Muslims have voiced claims for recognition of the distinctiveness of Muslims as a religious, rather than as an ethnic or racial, minority, such as in relation to experiences of inequalities or discrimination and Islamophobia, or in campaigns for equal access to state-funding for Muslim faith schools, for instance. On several issues, Muslim actors have had an impact in shaping policy decisions or achieving institutional recognition. Thus, the first state Muslim school was established in 1998,[3] and there are now 12 state-maintained Muslim faith schools.[4] Muslims, alongside other faith actors, lobbied strongly for the inclusion of a question on religious identity within the Census, which

[1] These were: Yasmin Qureshi (Labour, Bolton South East); Rushanara Ali (Labour, Bethnal Green and Bow); and Shabana Mahmood (Labour, Birmingham Ladywood).

[2] These were: Rehman Chishtie (Conservative, Gillingham and Rainham); and Sajid Javid (Conservative, Bromsgrove). The other three Muslim MPs elected in 2010 were: Khalid Mahmood (Labour, Birmingham Perry Barr since 2001); Sadiq Khan (Labour, Tooting since 2005); and Anas Sarwar (Labour, Glasgow Central from 2010).

[3] This was the Islamia Primary School in Brent, shortly followed by the Al-Furqan School in Birmingham. See Nasar Meer (2009) 'Identity articulations, mobilization, and autonomy in the movement for Muslim schools in Britain, *Race Ethnicity and Education* (12, 4: 379-399); and Claire Tinker (2009) 'Rights, social cohesion and identity: arguments for and against state-funded Muslim schools in Britain', *Race Ethnicity and Education* (12, 4: 539-553)

[4] Department for Education, 26 April 2012: http://www.education.gov.uk/b0066996/faith-schools/maintained

"No other minority group has been quite as prominent simultaneously across a range of policy domains… as Muslims have been."

was incorporated for the first time in 2001, facilitating greater monitoring of equalities across religious groups.

There have also been some important innovations in the ways in which government has recognised and engaged with Muslims in this period, and across a range of policy domains. There has been increasing acceptance within government of the argument that Muslims, and other religious minorities, should be afforded statutory protections, culminating in the Single Equality Act (2010) that provides the most robust legal protection against discrimination in Europe, and covers forms of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief (and for which Muslim organisations lobbied). There has been increasing engagement with Muslims on the part of national and local governments under the rubric of faith engagement, particularly in areas such as welfare, community cohesion or urban regeneration.[5] This found its expression under New Labour in policy documents such as *Face to Face and Side by Side,*[6] which set out a blue-print for state engagement with faith-based organisations, and there are clear signs that engagement with faith continues to be significant under the Coalition government.[7]

More controversially, New Labour set out to partner with Muslim civil society organisations under its counter-terrorist Prevent agenda,[8] in the process making a significant investment in community projects aimed at fostering faith and inter-faith-based dialogue, capacity building, and countering 'extremism' locally and nationally. Such engagement under the auspices of Prevent was heavily criticised, however, and the Coalition government significantly reformed Prevent in 2011. Whilst many of these innovations have been contested, they constitute a major shift in the ways in which government views the role of Muslims within governance, and have resulted in a stronger focus on, and embedding of, Muslims within governance and public life – although, as our report suggests, this has been a somewhat uneven process.

No other minority group has been quite as prominent simultaneously across as wide a range of policy domains – including equalities, cohesion, faith-based welfare and urban policies, security and counter-terrorism – as Muslims have been, and this in some respects underscores the rather distinctive place that Muslims have assumed within contemporary governance.

The study

This report presents an analysis of the shifts in the ways in which Muslims have been taking part in governance, and the modes and practices of governments' engagement with Muslims, over the last few decades. Based on documentary analysis, participant-observation and qualitative interviews with over 100 Muslim civil society actors, community activists, faith representatives, councillors, politicians, civil servants and policy advisors, the report focuses on the dynamics of, innovations in, and obstacles to Muslim participation in governance at the national level, and in three local areas –

[5] Adam Dinham and Vivien Lowndes (2008) 'Religion, resources and representation: Three narratives of faith engagement in British urban governance', *Urban Affairs Review* (43, 6: 817–845)

[6] DCLG (2008) *Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society* (London: DCLG)

[7] See for example: Eric Pickles' speech, *Faith and Social Action*, delivered to the Cinammon Network meeting of 16.6.11; the 'Year of Service' initiative launched by the DCLG for 2012; and Eric Pickles' speech, *Uniting our communities: integration in 2013*, delivered to the British Future/Policy Exchange event of 15.1.13

[8] DCLG (2007) *Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds* (London: DCLG)

Birmingham, Leicester and Tower Hamlets – since the 1990s.[9]

This is the largest and most comprehensive study of Muslim participation in governance to date in terms of its analysis of both national and local governance, across a range of policy domains, based on research with government and civil society actors, drawing on official sources and community perspectives. The research also coincided with the change in government from New Labour to the Coalition, and thus we are able to reflect on some shifts in governments' approaches to these questions from 1997 to the present.

Key issues

In exploring Muslim presence, voice and impact and the modes and practices of state engagement with Muslims, several key points arise from our analysis.

1 It is often argued that the state's engagement with Muslims has been effectively securitised as a consequence of the government's counter-terrorism agenda.[10] Thus, many have suggested that government's engagement with Muslims, particularly through Prevent, has been one-sided and instrumental, with security displacing other issues and concerns.[11] It is the contention of this report that engagement with Muslims has occurred across a range of policy domains, which have at times been in tension with another, but that **the state's engagement with Muslims is not confined, or reducible, to security concerns.**

2 State engagement with Muslims has arisen within different policy domains with different 'logics' – or norms and practices – of engagement. This research focuses on three policy domains in particular: equalities and diversity; partnerships with faith and inter-faith-based bodies for the purposes of welfare and service delivery; and security and counter-terrorism. **These three policy fields are not typically studied together. But, by analysing Muslim participation across a range of policy domains, we are able to provide a more rounded and differentiated understanding of relations between Muslims and the state.** This approach reveals that the dynamics of change are often shaped by different logics in different policy fields. Where there has been overlap between policy fields, this has sometimes led to tensions: as was the case in relation to modes and practices of engagement that were pursued under New Labour's Prevent agenda, for instance, where actors from the DCLG and OSCT were all charged with the delivery of Prevent, but were operating with rather different expectations, assumptions and practices in relation to engagement with Muslim organisations and communities.

3 The increased focus on Muslims in governance has been significantly shaped by Muslim activism. This has sometimes been contentious, especially in relation to questions of representation and the eligibility criteria for those groups with whom government is willing to engage, as the history of relations between the government and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) exemplifies.[12] Nevertheless, **Muslims have been increasingly active and effective *within* governance and not only under the radar in autonomous community domains, or outside of the nation-state on the global stage**.[13]

[9] For further details of this project, see: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ethnicity/projects/muslimparticipation/

[10] Derek McGhee (2008) *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, integration and human rights* (Maidenhead: Open University Press)

[11] Paul Thomas, (2010) 'Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme' in *British Journal of Politics and International Relations (*12, 3: 442-458); House of Commons (2010) *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009–10*, Communities and Local Government Committee (London: House of Commons)

[12] Fiona B. Adamson (2011) 'Engaging or Contesting the Liberal State? 'Muslim' as a Politicised Identity Category in Europe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (37, 6: 899-915); Lorenzo Vidino (2011) 'London's Frantic Quest for the Muslim Holy Grail: ThePost-9/11 Evolution of the Relationship Between Whitehall and the British Muslim Community', *Religion Compass* (5, 4: 129-138)

[13] Yahya Birt (2010) 'Governing Muslims after 9/11', S. Sayyid and AbdoolKarim Vakil (eds.), *Thinking Through Islamophobia* (London: Hurst)

4 Such gains have paved the way for a more sophisticated engagement with Muslims on the part of government, and **there is increasing recognition by government actors at national and local levels that the 'take me to your leader' approach that characterised earlier modes of government's engagement with Muslims is unwanted and unworkable.** This recognition has at times been replaced by approaches by government that might be styled as 'here is your leader', however. This was evident under New Labour in its attempts to reconstitute structures of Muslim representation, by privileging relations with organisations such as the Sufi Muslim Council who lacked a strong social base, or in seeking to *create* representative Muslim bodies, such as the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group or the Young Muslims Advisory Group. Whilst these bodies often comprised able people, with a great deal of expertise, who were politically and civically very active, they were not necessarily representatives of wider constituencies, and often lacked independent power bases. As such, they were prone to being sidelined and marginalised – and this was a charge that was widely made of Labour's response to the PET Working Groups.[14]

5 **There has been a welcome move towards recognising the diversity of Muslim civil society and greater flexibility in working with 'democratic constellations'[15] of Muslim organisations and interests, but there is a need for more transparent and accountable mechanisms of representation.** New Labour attempted on different occasions to diversify its engagement with Muslims and to consult widely, bringing in women, younger people, different theological perspectives and so on, but the bases on which actors were included were rather opaque – and this continues under the Coalition, for instance in the DCLG's and Deputy Prime Minister's recent meetings with the 'Muslim Leadership Panel.'[16] Whilst engagement with this body suggests that there will be an ongoing recognition and engagement with Muslims on the part of the Coalition government, the rationale for the current government's engagement with Muslim organisations is as yet unclear.

6 Questions of Muslim representation have been mired in often unproductive debates on the eligibility criterion for those groups with whom government will engage, and particularly on confused and inconsistent positions on whether government should engage with Islamists or 'non-violent extremists'. New Labour vacillated between a pragmatic openness and a more exclusionary position on this issue. Recent statements by the Coalition, particularly Prime Minister David Cameron's 'Munich speech',[17] suggest a hardening of the government's line on this. Our research suggests that in practice, the exclusion of Islamists from governance will be difficult to effect. In part, this is because some groups, regarded as (non-violent) 'extremist', are also seen as effective partners with credibility to reach individuals at the 'hard edge' of violent extremism, a traction that government and its favoured partners may lack. It is also the case that in some local areas, 'Islamist' organisations form part of the fabric of democratic participation in local governance structures, such that disembedding them may prove difficult, or even counter-productive. There is a strong sense, across our respondents, that **attempts to base engagement on simple binaries between extremist and moderate are unworkable and unproductive.**

[14] McGhee, ibid, pp. 75-76; Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi and Hannah Lownsbrough (2006) *Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism* (London: DEMOS) which suggested that 'At best, PET seems to have been a wasted opportunity.' (p. 26)

[15] Tariq Modood (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea.* Cambridge: Polity.

[16] The Muslim Leadership Panel met with Nick Clegg in January 2012, see: https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/DPM-Return-January-March-2012.pdf and Eric Pickles in February 2012, see: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/2186157.pdf.

[17] David Cameron (2011) *PM's Speech at Munich Conference*, 5-2-11, available at: http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/

7 Contemporary debates about multi-culturalism often characterise it as buckling under the weight of over-bearing demands by Muslims for public recognition and accommodation who yet adopt an isolationist stance with regard to integration into British society. We suggest that **Muslim claims for recognition and accommodation are typically voiced within a commitment to a shared civic and national paradigm** – and there is widespread support for this among Muslim actors. Indeed, our respondents consistently took the view that being true to one's faith was compatible with or *required* civic and political engagement in mainstream British public life.

8 There are significant continuities, as well as sharp differences, between New Labour and the Coalition on the question of multiculturalism: with both engaging in anti-multiculturalist rhetoric, whilst recognising Britain's ethnic and religious diversity, and both emphasising the need for a shared national identity framed largely in terms of shared civic attributes. New Labour's approach might be termed 'under the radar multiculturalism', in which it recognised difference and diversity in a wide variety of policy areas, whilst being reluctant to openly espouse multiculturalism (and here perhaps there is a parallel with its stance on redistribution). The Coalition's strong disavowal of 'state multiculturalism' sits alongside an approach in which through policy agendas such as the Big Society, ethnic and religious groups are able to gain recognition and state funding, typically at a devolved, local level. Given that in many localities there are strong political cultures of recognition and engagement with ethnic and religious diversity,[18] **there is potential for a continued, albeit perhaps unintentional and uneven, articulation of ethnic and faith-based identities and more sophisticated mechanisms of multicultural citizenship at the local level - notwithstanding national government and media narratives on the death of multiculturalism.**

9 Muslims have often been a lightning rod for disquiet about the challenge to secularism that the accommodation of Muslim difference in the public domain entails. In this 'culture war' as Cristina Odone put it,[19] **Muslims are not outliers but allies with other faith actors in supporting a religious presence in governance and public life**. This helps to explain sympathy among many Muslims for the established role of the Church of England in British public life. This is expressed in the perspective of Abdal Hakim Murad which supports Anglican public primacy in preference to an intolerant and privatising secularism,[20] or in approval for the public role that David Cameron ascribed to Christianity in his 'King James Bible speech'[21] such as that expressed by Ibrahim Mogra (Chair of the MCB's Mosque Committee).[22] Many Muslims in our research voiced approval for Near Neighbours: an initiative in which government funding for local inter-community and faith-based initiatives is being administered and distributed by the

[18] For example, in Tower Hamlets and Birmingham, local forums on equality and economic sustainability have been established in which faith actors and issues of ethnic and faith diversity are prominent: thus the 'Fairness Commission' in Tower Hamlets is headed by an Anglican priest, Giles Fraser, whilst the 'Social Inclusion Process' in Birmingham is headed by the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, and features a commitment to embracing 'super-diversity'

[19] Cristina Odone (2012) 'Baroness Warsi shows that Muslims and Christians are on the same side of the culture war', *The Telegraph*, 13.12.12: http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/cristinaodone/100194091/baroness-warsi-shows-that-muslims-and-christians-are-on-the-same-side-of-the-culture-war/

[20] He suggested: 'an *alliance sacree* between orthodox believers in different religions would, I think, deflate the potentially xenophobic and Islamophobic possibilities implicit in the process of European self-definition. If Europe defines itself constitutionally, as I believe it should, as either an essentially Christian entity, or as one which is at least founded in belief in God, then the fact of Muslim support for core principles of Christian ethics will give Islam a vital and appreciated place.' Abdal Hakim Murad, 2013, *Can Liberalism Tolerate Islam*: http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/01/04/3664244.htm

[21] David Cameron (2011) *Prime Minister's King James Bible Speech,* 16.12.11: http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/king-james-bible/

[22] Ibrahim Mogra suggested: 'For a long time Muslims have been trying to express this idea, that for us as Muslims Islam is not just a religion but a way of life. To divorce politics from religion is not something we are able to do, we cannot leave our religion at home or in the mosques, it comes with us wherever we go. So it's refreshing to hear the prime minister say Christians should do the same. I agree Britain is the best country for Muslims to live in, at least in Europe'. See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16231223

Church of England's Church Urban fund[23] (although there was some disquiet about Near Neighbours being administratively based on the Church of England parish system).

10 **There is substantial variation at local level in the governance of diversity, logics of engagement with Muslims and faith and inter-faith groups, articulation of equalities agendas, and the implementation of Prevent.** At times, the implementation of policies at local level diverges very significantly from policies articulated at the national level, and additionally there are substantial differences across localities – and this was true of the three local areas that were studied in this research. This study is unusual in being focused at both national and local levels, and it is this focus that reveals divergences between central government policies and the ways in which they are implemented on the ground – creating a picture of substantial local variations in the implementation of key policy agendas.

Overview of the report

Our report explores and expands on these key issues in the following chapters.

The next Chapter 2, on 'Muslim Civil Society and Representation', explores claims to represent or to speak for (or about) Muslims and the shifting perspectives of government on questions of representation. It pays particular attention to the complexity of Muslim representation, as well as to different types of representative claims that are emerging within governance structures. We suggest that there is increasing recognition of the diversity of Muslims and the attendant difficulties of locating actors who are able to speak for Muslims in a static or monopolistic fashion, but there is less clarity about the bases on which Muslim actors come to act as representatives within governance.

The third chapter, on 'Equalities, Diversity and Cohesion', considers the impact of Muslim participation in governance in driving an increased recognition of religious, as distinct from racial or ethnic, differences and disadvantages within equalities discourses and policies. Whilst the focus on Muslims within governance under New Labour intensified as a result of the security paradigm, it is important to recognise that there have been a number of significant and parallel developments within discourses on equality and diversity that have shaped engagement with Muslims within governance – which are not reducible to security concerns, and these have in no small part been an outcome of Muslim activism and agency. Under the present Coalition government, it is unclear how the modes of recognition that were established under New Labour will develop. Some important legislative advances in relation to religious equalities look likely to be maintained. Furthermore, the logics of local governance in certain areas are such that recognition of Muslim actors and difference continues to play an important role in shaping local policy and engagement.

"This study is unusual in being focused at both national and local levels… creating a picture of substantial local variations in the implementation of key policy agendas."

Our fourth chapter, on 'The Faith Sector', explores the role of faith and inter-faith groups in government partnerships, welfare delivery, regeneration, and faith and cohesion policies at national and local levels. In some areas, faith and inter-faith based structures and governance networks have acted as mechanisms for the inclusion of Muslim actors and organisations within local governance structures. The role of faith groups in governance increased substantially under New Labour, under its Third Way, localism and community cohesion agendas: notwithstanding perceptions that New Labour was reluctant to engage with faith. The

[23] See: http://www.cuf.org.uk/near-neighbours

focus on faith as an important facet of governments' welfare or integration strategies looks likely to find continued expression under the Coalition – particularly under its Big Society agenda. The coalition's interest in faith should not be understood as a signal of a new era so much as a continuation of an established trend. There are some important distinctions, though, with a shift from New Labour's attempt to found its engagement on a multi-faith paradigm to a more explicitly Christian heritage focus under the Coalition – signalled by David Cameron's 'King James Bible Speech' and the launch of the Near Neighbours programme. The coalition's vision of a Big Society powered by localism can be observed in action among inter-faith and Muslim networks at the local level. There are concerns, however, that such work lacks sufficient investment to be effective or sustainable.

The fifth chapter, on 'Participation and the Prevent Agenda', examines the impact of Prevent on modes and practices of state's engagement with Muslims. Prevent has been much criticised for securitising state's engagement with Muslims. The portrait of Prevent as a highly top-down, securitised and disciplinary model of state engagement with Muslims presents only a partial account of the ways in which Prevent operated in practice. In particular, there was considerable variation in the ways in which Prevent was both conceived and implemented between government departments, and particularly at the local level. Our research suggests that this continues to be the case, with local actors implementing Prevent in ways that are quite different to how they are framed nationally. Furthermore, Muslim civil society actors were not merely subject to the Prevent agenda, but were involved in reshaping and contesting the implementation of Prevent in varied and creative ways.

The final chapter reflects on the dynamics of Muslim participation in governance, assessing the advances made and challenges for the future.

2

Muslim Civil Society & Representation

Introduction

The question of who, if anyone, can speak for British Muslims has been a highly contested one in the UK. As we shall see, politicians, civil society organisations, think tanks, local governance actors, and many others have at different times and places identified a range of different Muslim interests and constituencies. The landscape of Muslim political and civic organisation has become increasingly diverse and complex over the last decade, with a variety of claims to speak for, or represent, Muslims being articulated: reflecting the social, political, ethnic and religious diversity of Muslims in Britain.

In this chapter, we sketch three very broad phases in developments in Muslim representation in Britain. The first is characterised by early, fairly disparate, attempts to develop Muslim representative bodies in the 1970s and 1980s, a time when 'race' and ethnicity were the primary bases of minority representation. This was followed by a phase of consolidation in the 1990s, with the emergence of organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which developed as an umbrella organisation in order to speak to government at the national level on behalf of Muslims. This phase gave way to a third phase of increased pluralisation and diversification of Muslim organisations from about 2005 onwards – in which a variety of organisations representing different Muslims interests, identities and concerns emerged and were variously recognised by government. This phase was accentuated by increasingly differentiated structures of governance at national and local levels that were developing over the 2000s, giving rise to a proliferation of different kinds of (non-elected) representatives on advisory groups, consultative forums, or local strategic partnerships. One feature of these developments has been a growing acceptance on the part of government that the 'take me to your leader' approach – or the demand for a vertically integrated Muslim body that speaks for all Muslims – is unsatisfactory and unworkable.

Whilst there has been a greater demand for, and recognition of, Muslim representatives within governance, in the last decade debates about Muslim representation have been uniquely heated, particularly in relation to: who is able to speak for whom, given the diversity of Muslims; the kinds of exclusions that have been evident in structures of representation in relation to women, young people or newly migrated Muslim groups; and questions over whether groups who hold illiberal values can legitimately be engaged with.[1] Among many of our respondents, there was a sense that the construction of simple binaries between 'extremist' and 'moderate' is unproductive, as we discuss in Chapter 5 on Participation and the Prevent Agenda.

[1] Martin Bright (2006) *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State's Flirtation with Radical Islamism* (London: Policy Exchange); Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton (2009) *Choosing our Friends Wisely: Criteria for Engagement with Muslim Groups* (London: Policy Exchange); David Cameron (2011) 'PM's speech at Munich Security Conference', available at: http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/

In this chapter, we suggest that claims to represent Muslim interests or perspectives should not, and need not, rest on representatives' capacity to represent all Muslims all of the time. Muslim claims and interests are increasingly articulated by 'democratic constellations'[2] of Muslim civil society actors and organisations, whose ability to speak on behalf of Muslims rests on different kinds of representative claims. Michael Saward[3] identifies three types of representative claim that can co-exist with electorally-based claims to representation, including delegate, authority and expertise based models. He argues that these different kinds of representative claims are becoming increasingly important in a context of more differentiated and devolved governance. We suggest there are a different bases on which legitimate claims to represent Muslim interests are founded. But, there is a need for greater transparency in the basis on which government (at national or local level) engages with Muslim representatives.

Early Muslim organisation

An early phase of in the development of Muslim representative bodies seeking to speak for Muslim interests began in the 1970s with the emergence of the first national representative bodies, such as the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Ireland (UMO), which was founded 1970 and celebrated its 'silver jubilee' in 1995. These first bodies rarely managed to make headway in the national political arena. Often they struggled to bridge ethnic or theological divisions among the UK's Muslims. The two largest umbrella bodies that emerged in the 1980s for example – the Council of Mosques for the United Kingdom and Ireland (COM, founded 1984) and the Council of Imams and Mosques (COIM, founded 1985) – tended to attract members of different South Asian Islamic traditions and, largely as a result, perceived each other as rivals.[4] For this reason this first stage, from 1970 to 1988, can be seen as one of limited and fragmented Muslim self-organisation.

Consolidation

The second stage, running approximately from the Rushdie affair in 1988 to about 2005, saw more influential organisations emerging and more significant links with the government being built. The Rushdie affair played a crucial role in the formation of new organisations such as the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA, founded 1988) and the Muslim Parliament (founded 1992),[5] and while these bodies did not themselves make a substantial impact, the former strongly influenced the development of successor bodies that did. One of the convenors of the UKACIA, Iqbal Sacranie, was prominent in the establishment of the National Interim Committee on Muslim Unity (NICMU, founded 1994) which carried out the consultation exercise that led to the foundation of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 1997, a few months before the election of a new Labour government. To date, the MCB has been the most influential national umbrella body.

This period was marked by a close relationship between the MCB and government ministers. Although British politicians were involved with some of the MCB's predecessors – notably the COM – both Conservative and Labour ministers went much further in helping to bring the MCB's leaders to public prominence. The precise extent of this involvement is disputed. Critics of the partnerships developed between the British state and Muslim organisations have tended to depict the establishment of the MCB as largely government-driven, with ministers not working with the MCB's leaders because of their grassroots support but rather, in Arun Kundnani's words, 'on the basis of their

[2] Tariq Modood (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity)
[3] Michael Saward (2010) *The Representative Claim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) and Michael Saward, (2005) 'Governance and the transformation of political representation' in J. Newman (ed.) *Remaking Governance: Peoples, Politics And the Public Sphere* (Bristol: Policy Press, 179–196)
[4] Humayun Ansari (2004) *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800* (London: Hurst & Co), pp.360–361
[5] see Ansari, ibid., pp.362–364

effectiveness in containing dissent and serving strategic interests'.[6] Much is made in these negative accounts of Muslim-government relations of a widely reported meeting of Muslim leaders with Michael Howard in March of 1994,[7] during which the then Home Secretary is supposed to have suggested that if Muslims in Britain wish to influence the political process in Britain they should establish a body enabling them to speak as one.

The MCB's leaders dispute the suggestion that the organisation was a government creation. Sacranie for example, who was the MCB's founding Secretary General, insists that the organisation's formation had 'no direct relation with meeting with Michael Howard' and that the NICMU was working towards the MCB's formation well before government ministers became involved. Whoever is right about this, the MCB clearly arose from a perception that Muslims needed a more stable, vertically integrated, institutional structure as a necessary mode for engaging with government, and what is not in dispute is the strong support the organisation received and the lasting relationships it built up with a number of influential political figures within the Labour government during its 'honeymoon period.' Jack Straw for instance was, in his own words, 'heavily involved' with the MCB from 1997 onwards. The leaders of the organisation were often invited to receptions at the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, even representing the latter as part of delegations to Muslim-majority countries.[8]

Building on the campaigning of the UKACIA, the MCB mobilised for the recognition on the part of government of a distinctive Muslim religious community voice that was not subsumed under an Asian or black community perspective, and for the MCB to be the voice of that community. This was expressed in various issues in which it lobbied, including: strengthened legislation on religious discrimination and incitement to religious hatred; legal accommodation for *halal* and *shechita* slaughter; state funding for Islamic schools; and the introduction of a question about faith identification in the decennial national census. Perhaps as a testimony to its institutional status, the MCB was largely successful in achieving these highly strategic and symbolically important goals.[9]

Pluralisation

With the events of 7/7, and in the context of September 11th, a third stage was inaugurated that involved, to use the government's favoured terminology, a 'rebalancing' of relations between Labour and the MCB and the emergence of a range of different actors and kinds of representatives with whom government sought to engage. Although support for the MCB was strong, it was never shared by all members of the Labour Cabinet. Indeed, former Home Secretary Charles Clarke commented that the relationship with the MCB caused 'deep divisions across the government as to whether or not we should be giving them the status that they were in fact given by our government, as being the representative body of the British Muslim community'. Following a series of well-publicised disagreements with Labour ministers,[10] the MCB was marginalised by a succession of unsympathetic ministers. As Ruth Kelly, the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, said in a 2006 speech, the government 'actively sought to

[6] Arun Kundnani (2007) *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain* (London: Pluto Press), p.181; Chetan Bhatt (2006) 'The fetish of the margins: Religious absolutism, anti-racism and postcolonial silence', *New Formations* (59: 98–115)

[7] see Humayun Ansari (2004) ibid. p.364; Sean McLoughlin (2005) 'Migration, diaspora and transnationalism: Transformations of religion and culture in a globalizing age' in J. R. Hinnells (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London: Routledge), p.60; Jonathan Birt (2005) 'Lobbying and marching: British Muslims and the state', in T. Abbas (ed.) *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure* (London: Zed Books), p.99

[8] Sean McLoughlin (2005 ibid.), p.61

[9] Tariq Modood (2009) 'Ethnicity and Religion', in Flinders, M., A. Gamble, C. Hay & M. Kenny (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 492

[10] In particular, these focused on the decisions to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan (see J. Birt 2005, ibid.), the MCB's choice to boycott Holocaust Memorial Day between 2005 and 2007, and the decision of the MCB's Deputy Secretary General, Daud Abdullah, to sign a Global Anti-Aggression Campaign document following the Israeli government's incursion into the Gaza strip in February 2009

develop relationships with a wider network of Muslim organisations', especially those that in its view were 'taking a proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values.'[11] This 'rebalancing' of relationships was in large part accomplished via the government's Prevent Strategy, as it sought to partner with more 'moderate' and 'mainstream' voices to counter extremism.

New Labour's Prevent Strategy (2007-2010) was a watershed for Muslim representation. This was because, with £60 million given primarily to Muslim third sector organisations to counter violent extremism, it was easily the largest single investment ever made in British Muslim civil society. Organisations received unprecedented levels of support to launch new initiatives. Prevent's decentralised management through local councils and across three central government departments often allowed substantial flexibility and creativity in the use of these funds.[12] Prevent therefore provided a completely new level of capacity to transform the status quo of Muslim representation.[13]

The consultative process leading up to Prevent itself was interesting in terms of the range of Muslim representatives who were included in the consultations over how the government should respond in the immediate aftermath of the bombings. A symbolic meeting at Number 10 immediately after the events, featured televised images of faith leaders expressing solidarity, was criticised for including only older male Muslim representatives. Subsequently New Labour set out to broaden the range of voices and perspective with which it engaged. In the aftermath of 7/7, Home Secretary Charles Clarke and a team of civil servants visited cities and towns across Britain to engage in consultations. The Home Office instituted a set of 'Preventing Extremism Together' working groups which met in August to October of 2005, and comprised 107 participants drawn from politics, the media, business, education, and voluntary, charitable and statutory sectors. This very diverse group addressed seven themes that themselves signalled a broad-ranging approach to the problem of violent extremism, including: (1) Engaging with young people; (2) Education; (3) Engaging with Muslim women; (4) Supporting regional and local governance initiatives; (5) Imam training and accreditation and the role of mosques as resources for the whole community; (6) Islamophobia and community confidence in policing; and (7) Tackling extremism and radicalization. The PET Working Groups established connections between a diverse range of Muslim actors and government – although its impact was less substantial than many had hoped.[14] A report by DEMOS concluded that 'At best, PET seems to have been a wasted opportunity.' Many of our Muslim interviewees had led or taken part in these groups. They tended to speak positively about the idea of the consultations, but negatively about how these were managed and processed by government.[15] Of the 64 recommendations made, the three taken up by government – MINAB, 'roadshows' against extremism, and community forums on Islamophobia and extremism – seemed to have been preordained in the process.[16] Even so, the PET working groups brought a wide array Muslims to the attention of civil servants and ministers for the first time, providing them with new opportunities for access and influence.

From 2006 onwards, Islamic interpretation became an official interest of the government,

[11] Ruth Kelly (2006) *Britain: Our values, our responsibilities*, speech delivered at the British Embassy Berlin, 10.10.06; available at: http://ukingermany.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=Speech&id=4615992

[12] Prevent was led by the Home Office, the Foreign Office, and the Department of Communities and Local Government

[13] See Chapter 5 of this Report for a more complete analysis of Prevent

[14] Derek McGhee (2008) *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, integration and human rights* (Maidenhead: Open University Press), pp. 75-76; Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi and Hannah Lownsbrough (2006) *Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism* (London: DEMOS), p. 26

[15] e.g., Nahid Majid (22/3/2011); Alveena Malik (Interview 19/4/2011)

[16] Paul Thomas (2012) *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism: Failing to Prevent* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), p. 59; Nasar Meer (2012) 'Complicating 'Radicalism' – Counter-Terrorism and Muslim identity in Britain.' *Arches Quarterly* (5, 9: 10-19), pp. 10-11

with policy reports identifying a need to promote 'mainstream' forms of Islam.[17] Increasingly the government not only formed partnerships with individuals and groups who, like the MCB, sought to represent Muslim 'community interests' but also with those with authority to speak for the Islamic tradition itself. Islamic Studies was named a 'strategically important subject' by government.[18] Public funding from Prevent was given to initiate and support the Radical Middle Way, an organisation whose main function is to offer a platform for religious scholars at 'roadshows' throughout the UK. The Radical Middle Way became a flagship of the work being supported under Prevent. It was one of the earliest favoured partners in the government's shift towards alternatives to the MCB.

Another organisation, Quilliam, may be the best example of how Prevent provided entrepreneurial Muslims with a newfound capacity to challenge the MCB model of representation. Conceived not as a representative body for British Muslims but as a 'counter-extremism think tank,' Quilliam was launched in 2008 and received strong support from many Labour and Conservative politicians and (until 2010) substantial funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office in order to provide government with expertise on understanding Islam in Britain. Quilliam produced reports, training, and media engagement to promote the notion that Islamism is an ideology that provides 'the mood music' in which violent extremism flourishes. However Quilliam's interests went beyond producing training and policy input. Co-founder Ed Husain explained that when starting Quilliam he had intended to disrupt the 'cosy' relationships between government and (Islamist) representative bodies, particularly the MCB:

> I hadn't wanted to start up an organisation.... [I was just interested in] challenging the status quo. There's a rebel in me that doesn't like keeping a lid on Muslim affairs... [But the political landscape was] very much dominated by the Muslim Council of Britain and whole of host of others who are walking in and out of Downing Street like they were the only representatives of Muslims. The whole representation model sought by government – send us your representatives – all that I found problematic.

Ed Husain and Maajid Nawaz, the co-founders of Quilliam, were ex-activists from *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, a movement that promotes political Islam and the reestablishment of a caliphate. Their histories as ex-Islamists-turned-experts seem to have been very effective for establishing credibility for a time within technocratic public policy circles. A key, and controversial, intervention by Quilliam was its identification in a secret leaked memo to Charles Farr, director of the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism, of a range of Islamist organisations with whom it argued government should not engage. The list included a range of bodies who were working closely with government on a range of initiatives or who were engaged in democratic politics, such as MCB, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), the Cordoba Foundation, the Islamic Society of Britain and the Islamic Foundation/Markfield Institute.[19] Testifying to its influence, a Parliamentary debate on whether Quilliam should continue to receive central government funding, Hazel Blears MP stated that Husain and Nawaaz 'were certainly instrumental, when I was the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, in my decision to set up the Young Muslims Advisory Group and the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group.'[20]

The Young Muslims Advisory Group (YMAG) and National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) were two out of a substantial cohort

[17] see Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) *Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds* (London; DCLG), p.12

[18] Higher Education Funding Council for England (2008) *Islamic Studies: Trends and Profiles* (London: HEFCE), p.4

[19] Quilliam (2010) *Preventing Terrorism: where next for Britain?* confidential Strategic Briefing Paper, available at http://www.scribd.com/doc/57458694/Preventing-Terrorism-Where-Next-for-Britain-Quilliam-Foundation

[20] Ed Husain in interview has disputed this statement and said that these Muslim bodies were entirely Hazel Blears' ideas

of Prevent-funded alternatives to umbrella body representation, all of which might be considered 'foils' to the MCB in one way or another. These two bodies in particular demonstrated a concern in Labour's Prevent strategy with building up young people and women in Muslim communities, to circumvent first-generation older male gatekeepers. Another body supported at the time was the Sufi Muslim Council, intended to give voice to Britain's 'Sufi Majority.' The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) was formed in this period as well. MINAB collected together representatives from a number of organisations and streams within Islam, in order to oversee standards in mosque governance and the training of imams.

In the years of New Labour's Prevent Strategy, various other 'competitors' to the MCB started to emerge or receive greater attention, in some cases without Prevent funding. Some of these, such as the British Muslim Forum (BMF), the Al-Khoei Foundation and the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) could be linked to ethnic or sectarian differences.[21] Others, such as British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD) and Progressive British Muslims (PBM) emerged at least in part to offer a counterargument to specific positions that the MCB had taken on subjects such as education and schools. With the proliferation and bolstering of viable representative organisations in the 2007-2010 period, the MCB went from being, as Yahya Birt has put it, 'the darling of the political establishment' to 'just another voice at the table.'[22]

This period represented a strengthening and broadening of the government's engagement with Muslims – although it was not uncontroversial as our Chapter 5 on 'Participation under the Prevent Agenda' discusses. Key to our discussion here is the increasing recognition within government of the need to diversify its engagement with Muslims and to move away from a reliance on working with a small coterie of leaders. This welcome shift from a 'take me to your leader' approach was at times supplanted by a 'here is your leader' approach, with representatives being selected by government and asked to speak for British Muslims, women or young people – sometimes with too little reach or credibility within broader constituencies to act as delegates or with authority.

Local-level Representation

For many Muslims in Britain, the politics of representation has been more of a local issue than a national one. There are now over 200 Muslim local councillors in the UK, a number that has been growing,[23] and has included high-profile figures such as Salma Yaqoob in Birmingham.[24] Thus, it is worth considering some key issues of Muslim representation in our three local case study areas of Birmingham, Leicester, and Tower Hamlets, where much change has occurred in the past few decades. Many local areas have mosques or Muslim organisations whose leaders serve in representative roles on the Local Strategic Partnership or other local authority-constituted bodies.

[21] The BMF (founded 2005) is a Barelwi-dominated, whereas the MCB's leadership is comprised mainly of Deobandi and 'reformist Islamist' Muslims. The Al-Khoei Foundation (founded 1989) is a small body of Iraqi Shi'a that came to prominence after it gave a platform to Tony Blair in the immediate aftermath of September 11th 2001 (J. Birt 2005, p.96). The MAB (founded 1997) is an organisation whose leadership is made up mainly of Arab Sunnis that derives general inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. See Sophie Gilliat-Ray (2010) *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.75–77. These three organisations, alongside the MCB, are the co-founders of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)

[22] Yahya Birt (2008) 'The next ten years: an open letter to the MCB', *Musings on the Britannic Crescent*. Available at: www.yahyabirt.com/?p=146

[23] Between 1996 and 2005, the number of British Muslim local councillors grew from 160 to 230. A significant majority of these councillors have been affiliated with the Labour Party. Sophie Gilliat-Ray, (2010) *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 249

[24] Elected as Respect Councillor for Sparkbrook ward in Birmingham in 2006

In Birmingham, mosques are prominent in such local consultative governance structures, with Central Mosque, Green Lane Mosque and Ghamkol Sharif Mosque regarded as important local actors. Nevertheless, many actors in Birmingham perceive a need for representatives beyond mosque structures in order take account of the social, cultural, ethnic and theological diversity of Muslims in the city – as well as in ways that provide opportunities for engagement outside of biradari networks.[25] A range of faith and ethnic-based consultative and participatory mechanisms were developed in Birmingham, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition that formed the ruling administration in Birmingham from 2004 until 2012. Through initiatives such as the Faith Round Table, or the Community Consultative Networks, Muslim community organisations and representatives have been represented in local governance. The Community Consultative Networks have some parallels with a previous entity in Birmingham – the Standing Consultative Forum (SCF) – also an umbrella group that was established in 1988 and disbanded in 1999. As some commentators observed, this model of group representation encountered significant difficulties, in part because of its tendency to see groups as homogenous entities,[26] and because several minority groups, women and young people were not included or sufficiently represented within the SCF.[27] Such criticisms have been levelled at the Community Consultative Networks, described by one equalities practitioner in the city as 'another collection of brown old men led by a white old man'. In Birmingham, there are perceptions that the City Council's approach to community engagement has tended to be modelled on Council-instituted forums to which communities are invited in order to engage with the Council – even where there are existing, established, self-organised bodies with whom Council could engage (such as the Faith Leaders Group, an interfaith initiative that was established the day after 9/11 when Rabbi Leonard Tann went to the Central Mosque to ask to join together in solidarity, and which pre-existed the Faith Round Table that was created by the Council).

In Leicester, faith organisations have for the last twenty-five years had a very prominent role in local governance. Once considered a 'Hindu City,' Leicester is now 'superdiverse'. According to council worker Patricia Roberts-Thompson, faith is 'everywhere.' Bodies like the Leicester Council of Faiths and the Leicester Faith Leaders Forum are deeply embedded in local consultative networks. Muslim civil society bodies in particular have become far more prominent in the past decade as the number of Muslims has grown and as public attention has been focused on them. The key Muslim representative body in the city is the Federation of Muslim Organisations (FMO). As a senior local journalist observed, there has been an 'interesting switch from there being an [FMO] that existed to discuss their internal issues to ... having a virtually full-time press officer'. In contrast to the positive fortunes of the FMO, the once-influential Council of Faiths has found it increasingly hard to maintain a public presence due to financial problems. Relations between elected representatives and mosques remain strong. But, according to former councillor Hussein Suleman the Iraq war disrupted 'patron-client'-style political relationships, meaning that now all parties have to 'work damn hard to get that Muslim vote'.

The East London borough of Tower Hamlets is the smallest of our three local case study areas, yet has the greatest concentration of Muslims in the UK, most of whom originate from Bangladesh. Many local Bangladeshi Muslims remain embroiled in the 1971 war-influenced rivalry between the Brick Lane Mosque (BLM) and the East London Mosque (ELM), which has had profound implications for the local politics

[25] *Biradari* kinship bloc voting has been challenged nationally by developments such as George Galloway's victory in the March 2012 Bradford West by-election. See Parveen Akhtar (2012) 'British Muslim political participation: After Bradford.' *Political Quarterly* (83(4): 762-766)

[26] BRAP (2004) *"Do They Mean Us?" BME Community Engagement in Birmingham*, BRAP Briefing No. 3, February 2004 (Birmingham: Birmingham Race Action Partnership), pp. 7-8

[27] Graham Smith and Susan Stephenson (2005) 'The Theory and Practice of Group Representation: Reflections on the Governance of Race Equality in Birmingham' in *Public Administration* (83, 2: 323-343), p. 332

of representation. The BLM has exempted itself from the Council of Mosques due to the ELM's presence and, in doing so, has opted out of many important discussions with the Tower Hamlets Council. The ELM, in contrast, is well represented on all key local umbrella bodies, hosting the Council of Mosques on its premises and (via Shaynul Khan, its Assistant Executive Director) chairing the borough's Council of Voluntary Service. The ELM's clout is undeniable. According to Dilwar Khan, its Executive Director, local power dynamics are now such that 'people may perceive that the local authority is doing more for minorities than the majority,' although he personally does not think this is the case. The media coverage of the ELM and its affiliated Islamic Forum Europe (IFE) has made these organisations unwitting 'representatives' of an allegedly sinister Islamism in national debates. Interestingly, this national notoriety does not seem to affect day-to-day local government and third sector partnerships, and local governance actors we interviewed described the East London Mosque and its leaders as 'credible,' 'professional,' 'pragmatic,' 'effective,' and 'nice.'[28] However Andrew Gilligan's *Dispatches* documentary 'Britain's Islamic Republic' has had more traction in the case of borough Mayor Lutfur Rahman, and is generally understood to have influenced his exclusion from the Labour Party.[29]

Representational politics at local level, then, are highly varied, with unique issues in each case. In Birmingham, there are many and very diverse Muslim community organisations in the city, that are not always particularly well linked to the Council – in part due to a tendency for Council to bypass existing community structures in creating participatory mechanisms of governance. In Leicester, participatory structures have a very prominent faith and interfaith-based character. In Tower Hamlets, the East London Mosque has attained a centrality within representational structures that is unparalleled by Muslim institutions in the other cases. Perhaps the clearest trend across our local case studies is that Muslims' political presence and voice has substantially increased in recent decades. Yet even this change has occurred at different speeds and to different degrees across the three localities. The brief outlines of local variation described here should give us pause before making generalisations about 'how Muslim representation works' in British cities and towns.

Speaking as or speaking for Muslims

Whether at national and local levels, those emerging to represent British Muslims and those Muslims who have become representatives have been subject to particular scrutiny, and questions of what it means to speak as, or for, Muslims were frequently reflected on by our respondents.

Progress towards establishing the presence of Muslims in public institutions such as the House of Commons has been slow. In 1997, Mohammad Sarwar was elected to the seat of Glasgow Govan becoming Britain's first Muslim MP. Since then, the number of Muslim MPs in Parliament has doubled with each general election. MPs Shahid Malik and Sadiq Khan served as ministers in Gordon Brown's Labour government, with Khan attending cabinet as part of his role. The 2010 election brought in eight Muslim MPs, including the first two Conservative and first three female Muslim MPs. When Prime Minister David Cameron formed his cabinet it included the first Muslim female minster, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi. Muslims remain underrepresented in British

[28] While the East London Mosque tended to elicit instant positive reactions from our Tower Hamlets interviewees, some politicians were notably cautious in the words they chose. A number of our local interviewees have frequently and publicly criticised the mosque (e.g., Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Hormuz Ali).

[29] In the documentary, Rahman was accused of having close and improper links with the Islamic Forum Europe. After being removed from the Labour Party by the national executive committee, Rahman subsequently ran as an independent and won the election to be Tower Hamlets' first Executive Mayor. The Council is now riven between the massive Labour group, a few Conservatives and a Liberal Democrat, and Mayor Rahman who controls the borough with a small cabinet of independents.

Parliamentary politics.[30] Even so, the strides that have been made have brought greater visibility to positive Muslim contributions in British public life. This has been refreshing, because the vast majority of press coverage on British Muslims has been and remains negative[31] and because Parliamentarians provide role models to Muslim young people, who as a group remain socio-economically disadvantaged.[32]

Yet for the politicians themselves, managing one's public image in times when 'extreme' Muslims so often make headline news has not been easy. Politicians of Muslim heritage often feel the need to downplay their religious self-presentation, working against the tendency of the British press to focus on their Muslim identities. For instance, one MP who entered Parliament in 2010, and who preferred to remain anonymous, claimed to have declined numerous approaches from Muslim groups since becoming an MP to speak on issues relating to Muslims. He had done so on the basis that if he were to act on behalf of Muslims he would be failing in his proper role of representing his constituency, which has very few Muslims.

Sadiq Khan, the Labour MP and current Shadow Lord Chancellor, has faced similar challenges. In Khan's view, the British media and some politicians have been 'lazy,' particularly in the years after the MCB's representative status had been questioned, because they have often looked for Muslim politicians as replacements for the MCB. Khan insists that he has been 'democratically elected by the people of Tooting to represent Tooting's interest in Parliament, not by the two million British Muslims to represent their interest in Parliament'. Nonetheless, Khan admitted to having felt the need to speak out for Muslims during periods of crisis, especially after the attacks upon London in 2005:

> I'm not a Muslim spokesman and I've always said from the outset I've not been asked by the Muslim communities or voted by Muslims specifically to be their spokesperson.... [But] when I became elected, very shortly after July 7th happened, there were very few British Muslims able to articulate how we were feeling, [the] fact we are all [supposedly] terrorists. And I couldn't run away from the fact that I'm a Muslim so I did media and talked about the impact on Muslim communities

Khan's decision to act as a representative for those who, he believed, are rarely given a voice is particularly notable because it was forced by events. He is, as he put it himself, 'happy as an expert in human rights, civil liberties, as somebody who understands the issues, but not as a Muslim spokesperson.' His case provides a good illustration of how the pressure to 'speak up' as a Muslim can come from the outside as well as from a personal sense of moral or religious conviction.[33]

Two other interesting cases of Muslim Parliamentary representation are Lord Nazir Ahmed and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, both in the House of Lords. Lord Ahmed told us that he saw his political role as influencing policy from a moral conscience, which for him was largely built upon Islamic principles. He had been able to do this with relative freedom compared to MPs, he suggested, because as a Lord he is not elected. Indeed a great proportion of Lord Ahmed's time and energy has been invested in representative and advocacy roles on behalf of British Muslims, such as leading delegations on the Hajj, scrutinising Islamic humanitarian aid

[30] Eight Muslim MPs out of a total of 650 MPs is 1.2 percent. According to the 2011 Census, 4.8 percent of residents of England Wales are Muslim. In other words, four times as many Muslim MPs, or 32, would be needed to reach parity with the population. See http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html

[31] Petley, J. and R. Richardson (2011) *Pointing the Finger: Islam and Muslims in the British Media* (London: Oneworld). Of course not all news coverage on Muslim politicians has been positive. For example, like other UK Parliamentarians, Muslim politicians have not been immune to expense scandals

[32] Ahmed, S. (2009) *Seen and Not Heard: Voices of Young British Muslims* (Markfield, UK: Policy Research Centre), available at: http://www.policyresearch.org.uk/images/stories/publications/SeenandNotHeard/SeenandNotHeard-Complete.pdf, pp. 28, 29

[33] Tariq Modood (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity), p. 137

charities, and speaking against his own party's actions in the Iraq War.

Conservative politician Baroness Sayeeda Warsi's case is perhaps more complex.[34] Nearly all of our Muslim interviewees who were asked about Baroness Warsi spoke positively, or at least sympathetically. Dr Husna Ahmad, who leads the Faith Regen Foundation, said: 'I just love Sayeeda Warsi. It's the first time we've got a Muslim woman in cabinet, which would have been unheard of 20 years ago.' However, Ahmad also expressed some concerns:

> I think she could be a tremendous asset for Muslim communities, but at the moment I don't know how much she is. Visually she is. Just the fact she's there I think is fantastic.

Ahmad expressed great pride in what Baroness Warsi represents ('visually'). As a fellow high-performing Muslim woman, she found Warsi's role particularly meaningful. Yet at the same time Ahmad perceived a potential distance between Warsi's symbolic part and her ability to fulfil it. Our Muslim interviewees, including Ahmad, spoke especially warmly about Baroness Warsi's speech at Leicester University, in which she declared that Islamophobia 'has passed the dinner table test.' This speech seemed to validate that the Baroness was willing to speak up for Muslims. As Ahmad remarked: 'she said it from the heart, and she knows where she's coming from.' Yet it has been precisely with this speech, and at similar moments, that Baroness Warsi has found herself at odds with her own party.[35] These cases seem to have influenced David Cameron's decision in his September 2012 reshuffle to shift Warsi from a position as co-chair speaking for Tory values, to one further from the heart of the Party as a minister at the Foreign Office and for 'Faith and Communities' at the DCLG.

As we have already observed, in recent years a great variety of people and organisations have attempted to speak for British Muslims. Observing this phenomenon, many critics have suggested that representation itself is a red herring because there is no 'Muslim community' to be represented.[36] On almost every social and political question, they observe, the Muslim population of Britain is divided. Often critics will cite polls demonstrating that very few Muslims in Britain – especially the young – feel that any one organisation represents their views consistently.[37] The coalition government that came to power in May 2010, or elements of it, appears to be more sympathetic to this line of thinking than its predecessor. Of the five current and former Conservative politicians we interviewed for our national-level research, four were sceptical of Muslim representation. The most common criticism was that Muslims are much too diverse in Britain – rather than a Muslim community, there are Muslim communit*ies*.

British Muslims are indeed highly diverse, and perhaps in some cases fragmented. Yet, following Michael Saward, accepting that a group is diverse or divided does not require jettisoning the idea of representation entirely. Representation can be taken on a claim-by-claim basis. Groups can speak for Muslims – or Muslim women, Somali Muslims, and so on – on some issues and not on others, at some times and not others. Interestingly, almost all the leaders of Muslim organisations we spoke to saw their role in this way, admitting they were not able to – and usually did not want to – represent all Muslims' interests:

[34] Baroness Warsi declined our request for an interview (10/2/2011) citing her adherence to the ministerial code.

[35] According to one of our sources in government, Baroness Warsi's speech on Islamophobia (20/1/2012) was not signed off by Prime Minister David Cameron. Indeed, it was seen to cut against the grain of Cameron's own speech given to a Munich security conference just weeks later in which he projected a tough stance on Islamism (5/2/2012). For a view of the Conservative Party criticism of Warsi related to Islam and Islamophobia, see J. MacIntyre (2012) 'Race and religion are why Warsi, not Hunt, is being thrown to the wolves.' *The Guardian: Comment Is Free*, 5/6/2012

[36] Kenan Malik (2009) *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books)

[37] For example, Mirza, M., A. Senthilkumaran and Z. Ja'far (2007) *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the Paradox of Multiculutralism* (London: Policy Exchange). A summary of the polls on this issue can be found in Field, C. D. (2011) 'Young British Muslims since 9/11: a composite attitudinal profile', *Religion, State and Society* (39, 2-3: 159–175)

> I was not one of the leaders [of the Muslim community]... even now I call myself a community worker.
>
> *Iqbal Sacranie, former MCB Secretary General*

> [While we] do represent significant sections of a community, we never say that we represent the whole community. We're not that arrogant. We know that it's very diverse – many communities are not fully with ours.
>
> *Muhammad Abdul Bari, former MCB Secretary General*

> Why is [there] this obsession of who represents? Whenever I speak, 'Oh you don't represent anyone.' Why should I represent anyone? I represent an issue and that issue you will find most people – Muslims and non-Muslims – agreeing with me. There: that's what I represent.
>
> *Anas Altikriti, former MAB President*

Conclusion: evaluating representative claims

There has often been too great a focus on whether representative organisations can pristinely resemble those whom they represent. For an umbrella body like the MCB, or for a national or local politician, this would always be an impossible role to fulfil. *There is a need to focus on the representativeness of the claims, not on that of claims-makers*. When claims are made the focus, the question becomes: to what degree does the claim resonate with a broader public? If it is an issue worth pursuing, then how well is the claims-maker placed to influence it? The MCB provides a good illustration. Very few Muslims in Britain regard the organisation as representing their interests consistently. But at least some of the changes for which the MCB lobbied in the 1990s almost certainly had the support of large numbers of Muslims. Its campaign to improve religious discrimination legislation, for example, was supported by individuals who had been critical of the organisation on most other issues.[38] Furthermore, the issue of religious discrimination could include all Muslims irrespective of theological persuasion or ethnic origin.

A closely related issue of current concern to British Muslims is Islamophobia. While there may be some disagreement on whether to call it 'anti-Muslim prejudice' or 'Islamophobia,' the existence of malicious attitudes towards Muslims is undeniable and must be addressed regardless of name.[39] Several initiatives related to Islamophobia have been launched in recent years including an All-Party Parliamentary Group as well as the monitoring and advice service Tell MAMA, run by Faith Matters. Even in these early stages there have been some well-known disagreements over which organisations could effectively carry out this work.[40] On this issue, there might be the risk of repeating the past. As Alveena Malik observed:

> the problem throughout 2005 and subsequently [was that] Muslim communities always mirrored its voice with competing voices…. Unfortunately what government did was play that ridiculous game of revolving doors, one in, one out. MCB in, MCB out. Quilliam in, Quilliam out…. I think one thing the Muslim community has to learn, learn very quickly is it's no good moaning on the outside. Get involved and make the case, and make it collectively. It's far

[38] For example, Abdul-Rehman Malik (2007) 'Take me to your leader: post-secular society and the Islam industry', *Eurozine,* http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-04-23-armalik-en.html

[39] Nasar Meer (ed.) (2013) 'Racialization and Religion, Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia', Special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36 (3); Salman Sayyid and AbdoolKarim Vakil (eds.) (2010) *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives* (London: Hurst)

[40] For example, the APPG was originally led by Conservative MP Kris Hopkins, with the Muslim media-engagement organisation iEngage serving as secretariat. When iEngage was called into question by ConservativeHome journalist and former MP Paul Goodman for alleged links to extremism, iEngage was removed and Kris Hopkins, along with Labour peer Lord Janner, stood down from membership of the APPG. Similarly, while support for Faith Matters' method of monitoring anti-Muslim hate incidents is widespread among Muslims we interviewed, some key individuals are less supportive. These examples show that disagreements over which organisations can legitimately represent Muslim interests may continue to stymie progress towards widely shared goals.

better that you have one voice than many.

On a claim-by-claim basis, this advice makes good sense.[41] It is worth keeping in mind for the many issues on which British Muslims have been expressing a shared interest in recent years, from foreign policy to climate change.[42] Currently, mechanisms for government's engagement with Muslims are somewhat unclear. The Muslim Leadership Panel has apparently met with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The Coalition government has supported Tell MAMA. But, there have been some notable omissions in its mechanisms for consultation and engagement. For example, a recent report of the Commons Public Administration Select Committee on the coalition's 'Big Society' agenda included contributions from the Chief Rabbi, the Assistant General Secretary of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in England and Wales and the Anglican Bishop of Leicester, but no Muslim voices.[43]

Muslim presence in formal politics and through umbrella organisations has been on the basis of hard fought achievements. It is from these foundations that Muslims have been able to influence policy (as we discuss in Chapter 3). The politics of representation has grown increasingly complex (perhaps especially at the local level) and there has been a proliferation of organisations. It is in this kind of environment where judging political claims themselves – and the pragmatic capacity of claims-makers to carry them out – seems a good way forward. Muslim political organisation in the 1990s followed a 'take me to your leader' model, which evolved into at 'this is your leader' model. To an increasing degree, however, state engagement with, and recognition of Muslim representatives entered a new less formal, but perhaps more promising and pluralistic, stage from 2005, in which there was increasing acceptance of what Tariq Modood has called a 'democratic constellation' of Muslim civil society organisations.[44] That such a constellation of differing interests and representative claims exists is some indicator of the complexity and maturity of Muslim civil society. The basis on which government engages with this complexity needs greater articulation and transparency.

[41] We do not mean to imply that there should be only one organisation campaigning on any issue, but rather that campaigns are best when coordinated or at least when they do not cut against each other. Likewise the most effective campaigning will often not be restricted to Muslims or one faith group alone (e.g., the successes of Citizens UK in broad-based organising for the living wage)

[42] E.g. the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) and the Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), have engaged in climate change advocacy

[43] House of Commons (2011) Public Administration Select Committee: The Big Society: Seventeenth Report of Session 2010–12, Vol. 1. (London: The Stationery Office)

[44] Tariq Modood (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity)

3

Equality, Diversity & Cohesion

Introduction

In this chapter, we outline how Muslim participation in contemporary governance is expressed in the policy fields of equality, diversity and cohesion. Self-evidently these are interrelated rather than distinct. Nonetheless we try to map out – in a non symmetrical manner – how and why Muslim participation has engaged with, and often revised, prevailing approaches.

We argue that Muslim participation in governance has been significant in driving an increased recognition of religious, as distinct from racial or ethnic, differences and disadvantages within equalities discourses and policies. Whilst the focus on Muslims within governance under New Labour intensified as a result of the security paradigm, it is important to recognise that the increased recognition of Muslim difference within governance is not reducible to security imperatives. There have been a number of significant and parallel developments within discourses on equality and diversity that have shaped engagement with Muslims within governance – and this has in no small part been an outcome of Muslim activism and agency. Under the present Coalition government, it is unclear how the modes of recognition that were established under New Labour will develop, given the Coalition's, so far largely rhetorical, declaration that state multiculturalism must be abandoned and its assertion that Britain is a fundamentally Christian country. In certain respects, such statements do not in fact mark a radical departure from some of the rhetoric on multiculturalism that was expressed under New Labour. As we discuss in the next Chapter 4, a focus on faith remains a theme of government statements on integration, social cohesion and national identity made by David Cameron and Eric Pickles – albeit with a Christian emphasis. It is unclear so far what the terms of inclusion for Muslim actors will be. Nevertheless, there are several important legislative advances in the recognition of Muslim difference that were achieved under New Labour that are likely to be sustained into the future. Furthermore, key actors within governance, and particularly at the local level, continue to express multiculturalist values, whilst the logics of local governance in certain areas are such that recognition of Muslim actors and difference continues to play an important role in shaping local policy and engagement.

Equality

Instead of a single 'written' constitution, the UK has developed body of legislation that is overseen by the judiciary and which protects both citizens and non-citizens from discrimination on specific grounds.[1] The focus of equalities discourses has been on how society can achieve fair treatment and participation for different groups in a manner that goes beyond how these groups might blend into society. Successive policy makers have incrementally devised measures that use group specific

[1] A basic level of protection is further ensured through the introduction of the 1998 Human Rights Act, which brought into domestic law key provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

instruments to outlaw – and proactively redress – discrimination.

Muslims and Race Relations Legislation

The key pieces of legislation advancing equality (of opportunity) for ethnic and racial minorities in the labour market, education, and the provision of public goods and services more broadly, have been the Race Relations Acts (RRAs). It is over 35 years since the third RRA (1976) cemented a state sponsorship of race equality: consolidating earlier, weaker legislative instruments (RRA, 1965, 1968) by extending the act to include indirect discrimination and statutory public duties. For a long time race equality approaches that drew on this legislation did not recognise Muslims as distinct from ethnic groups, even though in the legislation's application the courts tried to operationalise an understanding of ethnic origin that functioned as a wider concept. In the case of Mandla v. Dowell Lee (1983), for example, the House of Lords set out several characteristics which provided scope to bring ethno-religious groups under its remit, including 'perceived' group membership. In this regard, Sikh minorities became pioneers of expanding race equality legislation to accommodate discrimination against ethno-religious practice (especially as it related to the wearing of the turban).

Pluralising Race Equality

While Muslim concerns over the limitations of race equality came after that of Sikhs, during the late 1980s and 1990s it became much more audible. This was partly informed by the experiences of the Rushdie Affair, where the publication of a novel that disparaged both the genesis of Islam and the biography of the Prophet Mohammed gave rise to a great deal of hurt and anger amongst many Muslims who felt that 'as citizens they [were no less] entitled to equality of treatment and respect for their customs and religion'[2] than either the Christian majority denominations and other religious minorities. This episode highlighted the narrow colour-based manner in which the promotion of equality was still being conceived. As Tariq Modood asked:

> Is not the reaction to *The Satanic Verses* an indication that the honour of the Prophet or the *imani ghairat* [attachment to and love of the faith] is as central to the Muslim psyche as the Holocaust and racial slavery to others? […] Muslims will argue that, historically, vilification of the Prophet and of their faith is central to how the West has expressed hatred for them and has led to violence and expulsion on a large scale. [3]

The issues raised were therefore much wider than the complaint of blasphemy (an offence that was recently eliminated without opposition from Muslims), for the Muslim protest was expressed as a new ethno-religious challenge to 'exclusion from the existing equality framework'.[4] For example, while case law had established precedents in the application of Race Relations legislation with regard to some religious minority groups, namely Sikhs and Jews, it explicitly excluded Muslims.[5] The decisive rationale common to such rulings was that Muslim heterogeneity disqualified their inclusion as a single ethnic or racial grouping.[6]

The creation of consultative and representative Muslim forums, such as the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) and then later the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), consistently identified this disparity as a basis

[2] Muhammad Anwar (1992) 'Muslims in Western Europe' In Jorgen Nielsen (ed.) (1992) *Religion and Citizenship in Europe and the Arab World* (London: Grey Seal), p. 9

[3] Tariq Modood (2005: [1993]) *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (University of Minnesota Press and University of Edinburgh Press), pp. 121- 122

[4] Tariq Modood (2009) 'Ethnicity and Religion', in Flinders, M., A. Gamble, C. Hay & M. Kenny (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 485

[5] In the case of *Nyazi v Rymans Ltd* [EAT 10 May 1988, unreported] the industrial tribunal found in favour of the *employer* after it held that 'Muslims include people of many nations and colours, who speak many languages and whose only common denominator is religion and religious culture' (quoted in Dobe, K.S. and Chhokar, S.S. (2000) 'Muslims, ethnicity and the law', *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* (no 4: 369–86), p. 382

[6] See: *CRE v Precision Engineering*, 1991, and *Malik v Bertram Personnel Group*, 1990 [DCLD 7 4343/90])

for mobilisation. As one former Labour cabinet minister, Charles Clarke, recognised, what 'began as an outcry against oppression … I think it's gradually evolved to playing an active role in the politics of the community and people are seeing those respected community leaders.' Indeed, establishing an independent Muslim voice (one not subsumed under other identity categories) was a key policy objective of the UKACIA/MCB.

Such a view was shared by a number of activists in our study who had campaigned for a number of years for the recognition of the distinctiveness of Muslim needs or experiences of inequality. For instance, An-Nisa Society, a Muslim women's charity, was established in 1985 by a group of 'young British Muslim women', specifically to address the invisibility of Muslims within equalities and service provision, because:

In their attempts to address the needs of Muslim families they found they could not identify themselves as Muslims because race and ethnicity were the only markers of identity and also the criteria on which services were provided. A multi-ethnic British Muslim identity was not recognised and neither was the fact that for Muslims faith needed to be taken into account when delivering services.[7]

As one of its founders, Humera Khan, reflected, this was in a context during the 1980s when anti-racist organisations tended not to acknowledge faith-based discrimination: 'Brent in the Eighties was thoroughly race-secular-left-race, very hard line', yet 'we could see that the Homeless Persons' Unit was full of Muslims and the people who'd been discriminated on the ground in racial harassment were Muslims'.

Similarly, Fuad Nahdi, the founder of Radical Middle Way (RMW) and founder and former editor of the Muslim magazine Q-News, recounted the political environment in the late 1980s, in which he and others came together to establish Q-News, where dominant discourses on race made it difficult to express matters of religious difference within equalities circles:

> In 1989, we started a magazine called Q-News. Why Q? Because the only way a magazine could survive was to get advertising from Equal Opportunities, but Equal Opportunities […] was given only on a basis of colour. It was, you have to be black or Asian. […] We refused to be black or Asian because we said as Muslims we identity ourselves by our faith, not by our colour. So we called it Q-News because we wanted it not to be seen…

Muslims Catching Up

A key policy objective of many Muslim groups, then, was to achieve comparable protections for Muslims as for other ethnic and religious minorities. As Modood notes, until late 2004:

Muslims only had some limited indirect legal protection qua members of ethnic groups such as Pakistanis, Arabs, and so on. It was only in 2003, nearly four decades since legislation on 'race', that an offence of religious discrimination was created, though even then it was confined to employment until 2007.[8]

The changes in-between – and subsequently – have on the one hand been precipitated by Article 13 of the EU Amsterdam Treaty (1999) which issued the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations of 2003 making discrimination on the grounds of religious belief illegal in the labour market. This in Britain was only a partial 'catching-up' with the existing anti-discrimination provisions in relation to race and gender. While religious discrimination was extended to cover the provision of goods and services in 2007, there was no duty upon the public sector to take proactive steps to promote religious equality as was created in respect of racial equality by the Race Relations Act (Amendment) Act 2000 (following the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry) and as also existed in relation to gender and disability, until the Equalities Act (2010). On the other hand, the change reflected

[7] See An-Nisa website's history page: http://www.an-nisa.org/subpage.asp?id=241&mainid=57

[8] Modood (2009) ibid, p. 484

considerable lobbying to harmonise the new equality strands. This included persuasion from Muslim actors. Looking back on his discussion with Muslim advocates, the former Home Secretary, Jack Straw, reflected on the maturation in his own thinking, in overcoming a tension in conceiving of Muslim identity as voluntary and less deserving of protections:

> [T]he difference that struck me, going back 20 or 30 years ago, was that people can't change their race; I mean they're born to it. They can technically change their faith. However, my sort of more mature reflection is that their faith is as embedded a part of what they're born into as the colour of their skin. And I put myself in that position.

The earlier New Labour view continued to be held by members of the government though. For instance, a former junior Minister in the Home Office, Fiona Mactaggart, who held a Race Equality and Communities brief during her time there, suggested:

I don't think we have to say that all faiths are equal in all circumstances because I don't think they are. And I do think that the kind of discrimination you face for your faith is actually discrimination which in some ways you opt for.[9]

Muslim actors tried to overcome this voluntary-involuntary distinction by arguing for a levelling upwards, which placed faith in the same register as race and gender. For example, a Single Equalities Act was advocated by both the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the Forum of Action against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR). The latter argued that a single Act would show 'the indivisibility of the principle of equality and … place all grounds of discrimination on an equal footing…. More importantly, the amalgamation would rid the anti-discrimination law of the confusion, complexities and inconsistencies that currently exist'.[10]

Harmonising and Incorporating Faith

The previous decade, therefore, saw some significant incorporation of Muslim faith identities into equalities legislation, a process that commenced with the consultation, *Equality and diversity: Making it happen* (2002),[11] which launched the most significant review of UK equality institutions in a generation. The government then issued a White Paper entitled *Fairness for all: A new Commission for Equality and Human Rights* (2004).[12] The enabling legislation, the Equality Bill, was considered by Parliament and introduced as the 2006 Equality Act, and was a precursor to the 2010 Equality Act. This combined all UK equality enactments so as to provide comparable protections across all equality strands. The strands explicitly mentioned in the 2006 Equality Act included age; disability; gender; proposed, commenced or completed gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation. This Act is particularly noteworthy because it is probably the first occasion on which equality and diversity have been expressly linked, and are presented as a blend of traditional non-discrimination obligations, substantive equality goals around equal participation, and statutory duties to promote respect for diversity, human dignity and human rights.[13] However, while the statutory duty required of the EHRC in s.3 of the 2006 Equality Act did encompass religion, the more substantive 'equality duty' (which is an important element of the race relations legislation, sex discrimination and disability

[9] Although, Mactaggart made clear that whilst it might be better that faith organisations didn't play a role in public life: 'you can't uninvent things which exist', adding she thought it 'wrong that in our country with an established religion that other religions were not given equivalent opportunities and rights'

[10] FAIR (Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism) (2002) *A response to the government consultation paper, 'Towards equality and diversity: Implementing the employment and race directives'* (London: FAIR), s.4, paragraph 20

[11] HM Government (2002) *Equality and diversity: Making it happen* (London: HMSO)

[12] DTI in association with the Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Education and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, and the Home Office (2004) *Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights*, Cm.6185 (London: HMSO)

[13] See Nasar Meer (2010) 'The impact of European Equality Directives upon British Anti-Discrimination Legislation', *Policy & Politics* (38, 2: 197-215)

rights legislation) did not at first include the newer three strands of discrimination (religion or belief, sexuality and age).

This was an important omission and it reflected objections from the House of Lords, where one of the architects of the 1976 Race Relations Act, Lord Anthony Lester, argued 'it would be divisive and unworkable to treat religion and belief (including disbelief and non-belief) in the same way as the other strands'.[14] By the time of the 2010 Equality Act, the public duty did indeed include religion and belief, but the objection was significant for Lord Lester's amendment on similar political grounds weakened the 2006 Incitement to Religious Hatred Legislation by making it asymmetrical to Incitement to Racial Hatred (by increasing the threshold for the former and requiring evidence of premeditated intention).[15] An outcome regretted by one former minister, Stephen Timms, who reflected that Incitement to Religious Hatred legislation 'should've gone further… the original intent of the Labour Government should've been implemented but in fact it wasn't, it was frustrated in the House of Lords'.

Social Policy Learning

Nonetheless, by the time of the 2006 and 2010 Equality Acts, the particular importance of creating social policies to target disadvantage experienced by Muslim minority groups had become established. These included tackling disproportionately lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment, comparatively lower skills both in education and in vocational training, a greater likelihood to reside in deprived housing situations and disproportionately bad health.[16] Both the Policy Innovation Unit and The Social Exclusion Unit reflected a developing policy cognisance of these issues and indeed achieving targeted social policies was the third of at least four objectives that the UKACIA and the MCB identified as priorities. Yet this was not necessarily a straightforward learning activity, as one Muslim actor close to the formulation of policy, Rokshana Fiaz, Director at the Change Institute, Executive Director of the Coexistence Trust and former researcher in the DCLG, recounted:

> I think there was, for me particularly, a set of frustrations that I had around advice that was being given to government on issues related to Muslim communities that were either being provided by research outfits, units, that didn't have the kind of penetrative depth that access to communities...

Another actor, Alveena Malik, an advisor to the DCLG and Special Advisor to the House of Commons Prevent Enquiry, anticipated a gap between aspiration and implementation:

> a really good duty… its worth is in its implementation, and then its monitoring… and inspection of that. I'm not convinced the Equality Act will be like that. I think it'll maybe more useful in paper than it is in practice.

A significant development came when the government agreed to include a religion question in the 2001 Census. This was the first time this question had been included since the inception of the Census in 1851 and was largely unpopular outside politically active religionists, among whom Muslims were foremost. Nevertheless, it has the potential to pave the way for widespread 'religious monitoring' in the way that the inclusion of an ethnic question in 1991 had led to the more routine use of 'ethnic monitoring'. Hence, in less than a decade, and not without participation from Muslim advocates (such as the MCB as we discussed in Chapter 2), the UK government has moved from denying the existence of religious discrimination to introducing the strongest legislation on the offence in Europe. Most significantly, the new legislative developments have created a duty of multi-faceted equality in the public sector, and included religion in this duty. Whilst the latter

[14] Anthony Lester and Paola Uccellari (2008:) 'Extending the equality duty to religion, conscience and belief: proceed with caution', *European Human Rights Law Review* (5: 567–73), p. 570

[15] Nasar Meer (2008) 'The politics of voluntary and involuntary identities: are Muslims in Britain an ethnic, racial or religious minority?', *Patterns of Prejudice* (42, 1: 61–81)

[16] Dominic Abrams and Diane M. Houston (2006) *Equality, diversity and prejudice in Britain* (London: HMSO)

involved the utilisation of an EU directive, it has gone much further than the EU required.

This is in addition to other more ad hoc moves to facilitate recognition of Muslim religious difference in other areas of public life. As Stephen Timms, former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in discussing the Labour government's approach to facilitating the introduction of Sharia compliant mortgages, recalled:

…we did quite a lot of work just to make sure that, for example Sharia compliant mortgages could be provided without there being a financial penalty for them […]. So we just wanted to make sure that there was a level playing field…

Diversity

The above approaches to equality have of course been modified by concerns with diversity, which is why these policy fields are interdependent. The importance of diversity in conceiving not only equality but also unity has long been recognised in the way post-war migrants and subsequent British-born minorities have been treated as ethnic and racial minorities (requiring state support and sometimes differential treatment to overcome distinctive barriers in their exercise of citizenship). Some trace this to the Labour home secretary Roy Jenkins in 1966 who defined integration as 'not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'.[17] The prominent – though not necessarily joined up – manner in which integration has thus been conceived is through multiculturalist accommodation. Where Muslims have come to rest in relation to these conceptions is important to understand contemporary debates.

Muslims and Multiculturalism

Lacking an official 'Multicultural Act' or 'Charter' in the way of Australia or Canada, British multiculturalism has been gradualist and incremental; striking a balance between 'citizenship universalism and racial group particularism [that] stops short of giving special group rights'.[18] Alongside a state-centred and national focus, there is also a tradition of what has been characterised as 'municipal drift' where multicultural discourses and policies have been pursued though local councils and municipal authorities, making up a patchwork of British multicultural public policies.[19] It was through debates at the local level that one of the leading expressions of multiculturalism via the Swann report on education described multiculturalism in Britain as 'enabling: all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping society ... whilst also allowing, and where necessary assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within a framework of commonly accepted values'.[20] In 2000, the report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (led by Lord Bhikhu Parekh) perhaps marked the high watermark of multiculturalism. The report called for a 'rethink' of 'the national story' so that the Britain could truly become an inclusive 'community of communities and individuals', to which all ethno-religious minorities had a sense of belonging. This type of approach is said to have now buckled under the Muslim weight of allegedly 'culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands':[21] an observation illustrated in a statement by Trevor Phillips, former Chair of the CRE and EHRC, that Britain should 'kill off multiculturalism' because it 'suggests separateness'.[22] The British approach

[17] Roy Jenkins (1966) *Address Given by the Home Secretary to a Meeting of Voluntary Liaison Committees*, 23 May (London: NCCI)

[18] Christian Joppke (1999) 'How Immigration is Changing Citizenship: A Comparative View', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (22,4: 629–52), p. 642

[19] Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London: Runnymede Trust)

[20] Michael Swann (1985) *Education for All: The Report of the Inquiry into the Education of Pupils of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (London: HMSO), p. 36

[21] Tariq Modood (2006) 'British Muslims and the Politics of Multiculturalism', in T. Modood, A. Triandafyllidou and R. Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London: Routledge), p. 34

[22] Quoted in Tom Baldwin (2004) 'I want an integrated society with a difference' Interview with Trevor Phillips, *The Times*, 3 April. Available from:

to the inclusion of ethnic minorities is now increasingly qualified in terms of citizenship tests, the swearing of oaths during citizenship ceremonies and language proficiency requirements for new migrants, as well as repeated calls for an unambiguous disavowal of 'radicalism' or 'extremism' from Muslims in particular.

Muslims and Britishness

Accepting that there has been a challenge to multiculturalism does not however mean there has been a retreat from multiculturalism. Another way the shift can be characterised is in a move from the perceived neglect to affirmation of 'Britishness', presented as a meta-membership with which all should engage. While current debates about Britishness often turn on matters of devolution (e.g. the forthcoming Scottish Independence referendum), these debates are no less focused on ethnic minorities. For example, one salient articulation of contemporary British national identity in governmental policy and discourse, frequently discussed in the press, has sought its reinvigoration through the promotion of common civic values and approved kinds of political engagement and activity.[23] This may be cast as a sort of British civic national identity that remains embedded, as the Parekh Report described, in particular cultural values and traditions that involve not only a rational allegiance to the state, but also intuitive, emotional, symbolic allegiances to a historic nation, even while the idea of the nation is contested and re-imagined. Over a decade since the publication of the *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, a period that has included civil disturbances, wars abroad and then terrorism at home, as well as a distinctively multicultural London 2012 Olympics, the core idea that Britain rejects the idea of integration being based upon a drive for unity through an uncompromising cultural 'assimilation' remains as true as ever. This is not to say that competing discourses and policies do not have significant traction, but there is a resilience and dynamism in Roy Jenkins' famous dictum. We might call this a 'civic-rebalancing' of multiculturalism.[24] For example, the government-endorsed report entitled *A Journey to Citizenship* chaired by the late Sir Bernard Crick maintained that:

> To be British is to respect those over-arching specific institutions, values, beliefs and traditions that bind us all, the different nations and cultures together in peace and in a legal order. ... So to be British does not mean assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost.[25]

As Andrew Stunell, a Liberal Democrat MP and former Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the DCLG, argued, this did not mean that the government was 'trying to make everybody be the same and have some kind of homogenised society', for it was indeed very similar to the Swann position. What is interesting in these debates is how, despite a broader anxiety, fear of the loyalty of British Muslims seems unwarranted when the available evidence suggests that most Muslims have little difficulty identifying with Britain and feeling British. Using the 2005 Citizenship survey, Heath and Roberts show that 43% of Muslim respondents claim that they 'very strongly' belong to Britain and 42% say that they belong 'fairly strongly'.[26] These figures are corroborated both by earlier data, and reputable later surveys suggests that British Muslims identify more strongly with Britain than the British public at large.[27] Indeed, this is supported by a wider and repeated body of findings most recently reiterated by Wind-

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article1055207.ece?token=null&offset=12&page=2 [Accessed 13 July 2008]

[23] Meer and Modood (2009) ibid.,

[24] Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2013) 'The 'civic re-balancing of British Multiculturalism', and beyond...' in: R. Taras (ed.) *Challenging Multiculturalism: Managing Diversity in Europe* (Edinburgh: EUP)

[25] Home Office (2005) *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (London: HMSO), p. 15

[26] Anthony Heath and Jane Roberts (2008: (2007, 14) *British Identity, Its Sources and Possible Implications for Civic Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Department of Justice: HMSO)

[27] Tariq Modood, (1997) *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage: The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* (London: Policy Studies Institute); The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations, available at: http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/153575/PRESS-RELEASE-Gallup-Coexist-Index-2009.aspx

Cowie and Gregory, who concluded: 'British Muslims are more likely to be both patriotic and optimistic about Britain than are the white British community'.[28]

Whilst Muslims overwhelmingly report being comfortable with claiming a British Muslim identity, the perception that Britishness remains in some respects culturally, ethnically and religiously exclusive remains. David Cameron's recent statements on Britishness, multiculturalism and faith in public life could be seen as presenting a culturally narrower perspective on Britishness. For one activist, Humera Khan, such statements are perhaps an explicit acknowledgement of dominant ideas of Britishness, which political struggles for equality have not necessarily eroded. Thus, recognition and acceptance of Muslim difference for her remains an important political objective:

The dominant idea of being British is a very white, Anglo Saxon, Protestant idea and my view is, let's just say that's the norm. I've been saying for ages now I'm tired of equalities. I'm tired of trying to be equal. Let's just say we're not equal, but I have a right to feel confident in who I am and be who I am…

Community Cohesion

The suggestion that Muslims were not at ease with a sense of Britishness may be traced to events in the summer of 2001 when civil unrest and 'rioting' had taken place in some northern towns. The then Home Secretary David Blunkett gave notice of Home Office-funded teams which would 'undertake an urgent review over the summer of all relevant community issues'.[29] A contemporaneous local Bradford report set the pattern for official questioning of multiculturalism by arguing that particular communities, widely understood as Muslim communities, particularly after 9/11, were self-segregating,[30] an alleged tendency that was described in the Cantle report as the phenomenon of leading 'parallel lives'.[31] As such, since 2008 all public bodies have had a duty to promote community cohesion, comprising activities oriented to tackling segregation, engendering localism, and promoting 'bridging' social capital it.[32]

Muslims and Cohesion

A particular, but by no means sole, focus of the cohesion agenda became Muslim communities who were criticised as self-segregating and adopting isolationist practices – at precisely the same time that Muslim faith identities were being brought into the equality legislation. As one policy actor, Francis Davis, a policy advisor to the DCLG under Labour and the Coalition, put it,

> under Labour you get a lot of the equalities and belief, and then after Oldham and the like, you get a lot of cohesion. And you get a lot of using the faith conversation as a route to really having a Muslim conversation.... The cohesion agenda is really about getting the Muslims into the mainstream.

These reports pioneered an approach found in other post-riot accounts, which provided many influential commentators with the licence, not necessarily supported by the specific substance of each report, to critique Muslim distinctiveness in particular and multiculturalism in general: despite the fact that the Cantle Report focused on ethnic rather than Muslim difference. For example, the aforementioned Cantle Report argues for a 'greater sense of citizenship'[33] informed by 'common elements of "nationhood" [including] the use of the English language',[34] but it equally stresses that 'we are never going to turn the clock back to what was

[28] Max Wind-Cowie and Tom Gregory (2011) *A Place for Pride* (London: Demos), p. 41

[29] David Blunkett (2001) 'Respect for All', *Connections* (Summer), p. 2.3

[30] Ouseley Report (2001) *Community Pride Not Prejudice: Making Diversity Work in Bradford* (Bradford: Bradford Vision)

[31] Ted Cantle (2001) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (London: HMSO)

[32] Paul Thomas (2011) *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 33-40

[33] Cantle (2001), ibid., p. 10

[34] Cantle (2001), ibid., p. 19

perceived to be a dominant or monoculturalist view of nationality',[35] and its lead author has elsewhere pleaded: 'let's not just throw out the concept of multiculturalism; let's update it and move it to a more sophisticated and developed approach'.[36] Indeed a further government sponsored Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC)[37] in 2007 explicitly distinguished the definition of integration from a potentially competing assimilatory mode, where 'cohesion implies a society in which differences of culture, race and faith are recognised and accommodated within an overall sense of identity, rather than a single identity, based on a uniform similarity'.[38] Moreover, the cohesion agenda became quickly entangled in the Prevent strategies, and elsewhere was viewed as identifying the wrong problems, in the words of Fiona Mactaggart, 'if a particular group of people face institutionally structured inequality, you are never going to get cohesion': a view shared by the head of the EHRC, Trevor Phillips, who commented:

> the community cohesion agenda I think got dragged off into a whole lot of stuff about can we make people like each other better and all this stuff, rather than dealing with the objective conditions which create greater or lesser opportunities for people to participate and to interact.

Either way, the cohesion agenda marked significant investment in Muslim civil society and became a hinge on which Muslim participation in contemporary governance turned.[39] As such it marked an opportunity on which the government, as Andrew Stunell, put it, can 'build…as part of a much broader sweep'.

There are opportunities for this in the Cameron government's Localism Act (2011) and Big Society initiative, but as yet they are not being developed into something that seizes on the investment of capacity building in Muslim civil by previous administrations. Despite Cameron's anti-multiculturalism stance, the Coalition's 'Big Society' approach may yet enable it to flourish as faith and cultural groups take on key state functions. The approach more broadly aims to give localities and civil society organisations greater autonomy in local decision-making and a bigger, more direct, role in the provision of public goods and services. Here, as Modood points out, despite Conservative opposition to 'state multiculturalism', its Big Society agenda may provide the conditions for the flourishing of group-based multiculturalism, albeit in an unintended way, because of the way that it allows faith and other groups to take over responsibilities currently undertaken by state agencies. One key example of this is the Big Society's flag-ship policy on 'free schools' which has entailed state funding for new community-based non-state schools – resulting in a significant number (over a quarter) of these new schools being established by faith groups.[40] This might be characterised as a form of unintentional multiculturalism, however, and the opportunities it creates for minorities are likely to be very uneven and the fuller implications uncertain.

This approach can be distinguished from New Labour's approach to multiculturalism, which was based on a rhetorical distancing from multiculturalism whilst at the same time recognising and accommodating difference in practice – sometimes 'under the radar'. This was not a laissez-faire approach, however, as former junior Minister in the Home Office, Fiona Mactaggart, who held a Race Equality and Communities brief during her time there, explained. In distinguishing between the approaches taken by New Labour and the Coalition to service delivery by religious organisations, she stated: 'I don't think we devolved power. I think we created opportunity and that's a different thing to devolving power. I think we retained the power and I think it's right to, and I'm worried that this government is thinking of devolving it.' She continued:

[35] Cantle (2001), ibid., p. 18
[36] Cantle (2001), ibid., p. 91
[37] Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC) (2007) *Our Shared Future: Themes, Messages and Challenges: A Final Analysis of the Key Themes from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion Consultation* (London: HMSO)
[38] COIC (2007) ibid., p. 5, emphases in the original
[39] Paul Thomas (2011) ibid.

> it seemed to me that … it couldn't be right in a multiracial society to say that people of different beliefs, somehow their beliefs weren't permitted when one particular belief system was permitted to ... run education institutions. It just was wrong. But we were very clear about the rules about giving children the experience of other faith communities, about admissions and so on. We weren't devolving the power about those kind of things. We were devolving the opportunity to run the schools, not the power to set the educational agenda.

Conclusion

The story of Muslim participation in governance across the policy fields of equality, diversity and cohesion is an incremental and cumulative one. In some respects Muslims have moved from the periphery to the centre of these agendas (in manner not always of their choosing). Nonetheless, they have established as legitimate the policy recognition of 'Muslim' (as distinct from racial or ethnic, differences and disadvantages within equalities discourses and policies).

Our understanding of these successes, however, to might easily be overshadowed by how rapidly the focus on Muslims within governance under New Labour intensified as a result of the security paradigm (see Chapters 2 and 4). This would be an error. In this Chapter we have charted how the recognition of Muslim difference within governance was being pursued long before contemporary security imperatives, in no small part reflecting Muslim activism and agency.

Whilst in the 2000s Muslims successively achieved extensive legislative protection and by the Equalities Act of 2010 they had achieved equal protection to all the other main equality strands, something that in 2009 seemed unlikely, in some respects, Muslims lost the political-discursive or public opinion war. This disparity was noted by Mohammed Abdul Aziz, a former DCLG advisor, who reflected:

> So we won the legislation over the last ten years but, in a sense, public attitudes deteriorated over the last ten years, you know, the narrative on equality, diversity, human rights, multiculturalism, has really, really suffered in that same period, in that all the legislation that we did get into place was projected out there as privileges for minority groups rather than protection for minority groups. And we lost that battle because we didn't focus on that battle. We were too focused on getting the legislation.

The incremental and hard-fought gains point to a broader tendency that is perhaps less dramatic but equally vital in understanding how and why Muslim-state engagement in these policy fields may continue to proceed and develop. As Mohammed Abdul Aziz makes clear, the battle to establish a counter-narrative to the dominant narratives on Muslims and multiculturalism is ongoing.

It is as yet unclear how state engagement with Muslims will develop under the present Coalition government. A meaningful policy departure from modes of recognition that were established under New Labour appears unlikely. Yet while the rhetorical and discursive contrast is, on occasion, strong, there is a danger that without a clear and positive governmental strategy to continue to seek Muslim inclusion in these areas, the goodwill and collaborative relationships forged between Muslim actors and the state could be undermined.

[40] Tariq Modood (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*, 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Polity Books)

4

The Faith Sector

Introduction

One distinctive area of participatory governance has been the increasing involvement of faith-based organisations (FBOs) and representatives in national and local policy creation and implementation, in what is sometimes called the 'faith sector.'[1] Faith groups have been drawn into a range of partnerships and forums including Local Strategic Partnerships, urban regeneration partnerships, social service planning and delivery, consultations, and health, police and neighbourhood forums. A key 2008 DCLG report, *Face to Face and Side by Side*, highlighted the significance of FBOs to public service delivery: 'Public authorities are increasingly recognising the role that faith communities and faith based organisations can play in delivering on their agenda and the opportunities for developing innovative community led solutions through partnership working.'

Under New Labour, the functional boundaries of local government were softened and new governance spaces were opened up to faith representatives and groups. Some key changes in this regard included: 1) Institutional reform, driven by the separation of councillors' executive and scrutiny powers; 2) The participation of councillors in a broader range of non-elected bodies (e.g., in health and policing) to enhance democratic representativeness; 3) Efforts to increase the participation of local people through new democratic forms, including participation in planning or budget decisions; 4) Increases in funding for urban regeneration (e.g., the New Deal for Communities); 5) The extension of consumer choices in welfare; and 6) The introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in which 'key stakeholders' could take part in local co-governance.[2] The new LSPs were required to 'make specific efforts to involve and consult faith communities,' with the result that faith representatives became increasingly visible in these local governance bodies.[3] Overall, the proliferation of new routes for faith groups into local governance can be summarised as the 'pluralisation of the sites of the political.'[4]

To a substantial extent these changes were the result of broader attempts to foster democratic renewal and of developments in public management, as expressed in the government white paper *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* (1998). However, changes in the receptivity to faith representatives and faith-related language can also be traced to the

[1] Adam Dinham and Vivien Lowndes (2008:817-845) Engagement in British Urban Governance: Religion, Resources, and Representation: Three Narratives of Faith. *Urban Affairs Review* (43, 6). However, as these authors note, there is no naturally bounded 'faith sector' but rather it 'is essentially a discursive construction of policy makers', p. 17

[2] On the first three points, see Les Back, Michael Keith, Azra Khan, Kalbir Shukra and John Solomos (2009: 1-23) 'Islam and the New Political Landscape Faith Communities, Political Participation and Social Change' *Theory, Culture & Society* (26, 4). On consumer choice, see J. Clarke, J. Newman, N. Smith, E. Vidler and L. Westmarland (2007) *Creating Citizen-Consumers: Changing Public and Changing Public Services* (London: Sage)

[3] Adam Dinham and Vivien Lowndes (2008:817-845) Engagement in British Urban Governance: Religion, Resources, and Representation: Three Narratives of Faith. *Urban Affairs Review* (43, 6)

[4] Interview with Michael Keith

influence of the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) within government and the advocacy of other groups close to government, particularly in New Labour's first term, such as the Inter Faith Network and Muslim Council of Britain. These bodies helped facilitate what has been called a 'subtle permeation of the culture of government'[5] towards a greater receptivity to religious groups and language. Over time, central and local government policy-making incorporated increasingly sophisticated understandings of 'faith relations' to complement (or in certain cases supersede) the existing work on race equality.[6]

The Conservative-led coalition government that took power in 2010 has in many ways built upon earlier developments in faith sector governance. There are ongoing debates on whether this government's emphasis on the Big Society and localism is, in general, renewing opportunities for faith participation, or if funding cuts have adversely affected the faith sector. Our research investigates the position of Muslims in particular, and an interesting picture has been emerging. National-level rhetoric in the coalition has shifted towards describing Britain as a 'Christian country' and has emphasised central government's increasingly restrictive stance towards partnerships with Muslim groups. However at a local-level, Muslim faith leaders and organisations became deeply embedded in faith sector governance networks during the New Labour period, and they remain so today in ways that are evident in the government's Near Neighbours initiative, for instance. Some Muslim governance actors dispute the 'Christian country' rhetoric of the coalition while others are more comfortable with a strong national role of Christianity as a historical inheritance and a bulwark against secularism. In this chapter we investigate some of the debates and tensions between (and within) local and national levels in these issues of faith sector governance.

New Labour's Multi-Faith Balancing Act

Despite Alastair Campbell's well-known phrase 'we don't do God,' the thirteen years of New Labour government were a time of profound change for the place of faith in governance and public policy. The first New Labour term (1997-2001) ushered in several milestones. State funding for faith schools was expanded beyond Christian and Jewish schools for the first time, enabling parity for Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and potentially others. A religion question was added to the 2001 Census in recognition of the importance of religion as a self-identification for many people. Faith played a role in national commemorations: Holocaust Memorial Day was introduced and the Lambeth Group incorporated faith into the Millennium celebrations. Alongside these and other developments, the Muslim Council of Britain enjoyed insider status. It was frequently acknowledged in public events and invited to receptions as a major interlocutor with government.[7]

New Labour had invested a great deal of attention in symbolic unity between faiths, particularly in the aftermaths of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. A good early example can be seen in the Home Office document *Working Together* (2004) which outlined the government's methods for consulting with faith groups. The document advises that consultations should at a

[5] Bishop John Austin and Roy Taylor (1998) *Review of the Inner Cities Religious Council*. Review document commissioned by Hilary Armstrong MP; See also Jenny Taylor (2004) 'There's Life in the Establishment – But Not as We Know It,' *Political Theology* (5, 3)

[6] For the transition from a politics of race to faith, see Tariq Modood (2005) *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). See also Sean McLoughlin (2010) 'From Race to Faith Relations, the Local to the National Level: The State and Muslim Organisations in Britain' in A. Kreienbrink and M. Bodenstein, eds. *Muslim Organisations and the State: European Perspectives* (Nurnberg, Germany: Bundesamt fur Migration und Fluchtlinge, 123-149)

[7] Liat Radcliffe (2004) 'A Muslim Lobby at Whitehall? Examining the Role of the Muslim Minority in British Foreign Policy Making. *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* (15, 3: 365-386). These changes in New Labour's recognition of faith were not universally celebrated by faith actors, or even by Muslims. The MCB's status was particularly controversial, and many of the other Muslim organisations started in the 1990s and 2000s challenged this. See Chapter 2 on 'Representation.'

minimum include the five demographically largest faiths in the United Kingdom (Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs) and preferably should extend to nine faiths (adding Baha'is, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians). New Labour ministers meticulously balanced the representatives of these faith groups for an appearance of multi-faith consensus.

The government also made an unprecedented level of financial investment in faith groups. Some £13.8 million was spent on the 'Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund' from 2006-2008, which was topped up with an additional £7.5 million to accompany the *Face to Face and Side by Side* strategy in 2008. Stephen Timms MP (Labour Party Vice Chairman for Faith Groups) and John Battle MP (the Prime Minister's Faith Envoy) spoke frequently to faith groups to reassure them that government was listening and to exhort their civic participation. The government's *Face to Face and Side by Side* strategy showed a remarkable religious literacy in terms of its understanding of the ethnic and cultural complexities of religious traditions in Britain and the many roles religion can play in people's lives. The DCLG-commissioned report *Contextualising Islam in Britain* (2009), authored by a team of Muslim scholars and leaders, was even more sophisticated.

Perhaps some of these developments in the faith sector could have been expected. Several in the New Labour leadership, including Tony Blair and Jack Straw, had been active in the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) before the government came to power, with Blair writing the foreword to a CSM collection of speeches and sermons in 1993.[8] Faith became important to New Labour's Third Way agenda, influenced in particular by the communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni and the 'social capital' perspective of Robert Putnam.[9] Religious congregations were increasingly seen as reservoirs of under-tapped and responsible voluntarism that could be channelled into the government's initiatives for civil renewal. The term 'faith,' rather than religion, had become the more positive and preferred term for a variety of political uses.

Yet the larger question emerging in the latter years of New Labour concerned whether the government's interest in faith was little more than a thinly concealed interest in Muslims. The more than £60 million New Labour's Prevent counter-terrorism agenda provided to local authorities,[10] focused on Muslims alone, easily dwarfed their general faith capacity building programmes. This disparity did not go unnoticed by those in other faith traditions, and led some to speak of the PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) as 'Promoting Virulent Envy.'[11]

Local Variation

While faith was becoming a greater concern of national debates, local practices were changing to incorporate religious leaders in governance bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships and to take advantage of new faith-related funding streams. The 2000s have been a time of growth and political maturation for many inter-faith forums and religious institutions. These local developments have probably been more profound and lasting than any change at national-level, and we will therefore give

[8] Tony Blair (1993: 9-12), 'Foreword' in Bryant, C. (ed.) *Reclaiming the Ground: Christianity and Socialism* (London: Spire). For an analysis of New Labour's public approach to faith see Elaine L. Graham (2009) 'God and New Labour: A Joke or an Enigma?' in Elaine L. Graham (ed.) *Doing God? Public Theology under Blair* (London: Continuum)

[9] Robert Putnam devotes a chapter in his major book *Bowling Alone* to the decline of religious participation, and many of his works emphasise that religious congregations are important bearers of social capital (e.g., *Better Together*, *American Grace*). Amitai Etzioni, when writing about the positive social effects of community bonds, states that 'The strongest evidence for these statements is found in religious communities that meet my definition of shared affective bonds and a moral culture.' See Amitai Etzioni (2000) *The Third Way to a Good Society* (London: Demos) p. 9

[10] The DCLG distributed a total of £61.7 million to local authorities under New Labour's Prevent programme. Prevent funding to the OSCT in the Home Office was substantially larger, and funding was also provided to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for Prevent work abroad. For a breakdown of Prevent spending see HM Government (2011) *Prevent Strategy* (London: The Stationery Office), pp. 100-102. See also Arun Kundnani (2009) *Spooked: How Not To Prevent Violent Extremism* (London: Institute of Race Relations), pp. 11-12

[11] Yahya Birt (2009) 'Promoting Virulent Envy?: Reconsidering the UK's Terrorism Prevention Strategy." *The RUSI Journal* (154, 4: 52-58)

significant attention to our three local case studies.

Birmingham

Birmingham has a long tradition of inter-faith, and especially Christian-Muslim, initiatives, and faith forms an important part of local narratives about Birmingham as a vibrant multicultural city. Important inter-faith structures include the Faith Leaders Group, which was established shortly after 9/11, when a Jewish Rabbi, Leonard Tann, walked up the steps of Central Mosque on 12th September 2001 to show solidarity with Muslim leaders. This group has expanded its membership to other faith groups, including Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh. The Birmingham Council of Faiths is another autonomous body established in 1973 and run by faith groups, although with little contact with, or support from, the City Council.

Attempts at formalising the relationship between faith groups and the Council are documented in a Council Report of 2002: *A pathway to greater inclusion: Birmingham and its faith communities*. The report noted the growing recognition of religious discrimination and inequalities, and the potential for faith groups to contribute to local service delivery and bring knowledge of and expertise on hard to reach communities. It also noted that Birmingham, despite its multicultural character and the presence of a large number of faith-based organisations (estimated at 800 in 2002), lagged behind smaller cities and towns 'when it comes to more sophisticated multi-faith collaboration'. The report noted the lack of institutional links between the Council and a prominent interfaith body: the Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) and cited Leicester as an example of a city that had developed viable cooperation between the Council and faith groups (with the Leicester Council of Faiths). The report recommended a process for eventually constituting a faith forum, comprised of 'leaders' of faith groups.

Following the formation of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration in 2004, Birmingham City Council did establish an inter-faith forum – the Faith Round Table – as a mechanism for consultation with faith groups. The Faith Round Table is described by one local faith actor, however, as 'not particularly popular with the faiths and the faith leaders.' He went onto suggest that there were two reasons for this: 'One is an instinctive lack of trust in the political process [...] on the part of the faith leaders, and secondly the political methodology, which was usually quite strongly the agenda of the needs of the political process.'

This faith actor viewed the approach of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration to faith as instrumental, suggesting that inter-faith activity in the city was 'vigorous and *non-statutory*.' Andrew Smith, the Church of England's Director of Interfaith Relations, suggested that whilst the Council does 'tend to think faith matters,' its engagement has been rather limited. Indeed, there were perceptions among several of our interview contacts that the City Council has had too little sustained engagement with faith groups, despite frequent references to Birmingham's faith diversity in its policy documents. Respondents commented on vigorous, but autonomous, interfaith activity in Birmingham, and cited City Council initiatives as disengaged or led by a rationale that had too little resonance with faith groups. One such initiative, for instance, was the Faith Map – a website launched by Councillor Alan Rudge, then Cabinet member for Equalities in the Coalition-run Council, which set out to map the presence of faith institutions and groups in the city, and whose rationale seemed unclear to many. As one faith actor reflected:

> Faith Map Birmingham, and that was slow to start. Again, the culture of hesitation in collaboration with City Council and also [...], what is the *real* motivation for mapping every madrassah and every church hall? What's really going on? [...] the question: who is going to use it? Because once you've clicked on once to find a bit of information or check whether you're on it accurately, who's it actually for, who wants to know? So I

> think there's quite a lot of scepticism in terms of those who are committed to interfaith and committed to community regeneration about what it's really for.

He cited a number of successful faith-based initiatives in the city, including a collaboration between the Local Education Authority and faith groups to develop a local version of the Religious Education curriculum; the Feast – a Christian-Muslim youth initiative founded by Andrew Smith; and interfaith initiatives to respond to the riots of 2011 or an EDL march in the city. Generally, whilst faith features very strongly in narratives on Birmingham's diversity and in civil renewal strategies, interfaith activities, in which Muslims participate, are characterised as largely church-driven and fairly autonomous from the City Council.

Leicester

Leicester has perhaps the most well developed faith sector in the whole of the UK. There are a wide variety of Muslim civil society organisations (as well as other faith and ethnic associations), a range of inter-faith forums, and a variety of points of contact between faith and local government infrastructures.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Leicester's Muslim and inter-faith organisations have had a positive effect upon inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in the city. The creation of the Federation of Muslim Organisations, an umbrella group for mosques and other Muslim associations, helped prevent different Muslim groups from being 'played off' against one another, thus allowing for more effective campaigning. The FMO has in the past successfully campaigned for the provision of *halal* food in schools, for accommodation for Muslim burial facilities and for the *adhan* to be broadcast from certain mosques at certain times of the day.[12] It was also credited with ensuring that the protests against *The Satanic Verses* in Leicester passed peacefully and it played a prominent role in bringing people together for the 'We are One Leicester' event, a rally organised by the Council on the day immediately after the EDL protest in 2010. Similarly, the Leicester Multicultural Advisory Group (LMAG) has been credited with ensuring that there was not conflict when a series of anti-terror raids were carried out on some newly arrived Somali residents.[13]

Despite these successes, the well-developed relationship between the local government and the faith sector does not seem to have prevented Muslims in Leicester – particularly the young – from feeling politically disenfranchised relative to non-Muslims. There are also some indications that partnerships have been developed with some ethnicities, castes and denominations, while others have felt excluded. For example, in interview research into the faith sector it has been claimed that Hindu leaders in Leicester are almost exclusively from the Brahmin caste.[14] Given that concern has been growing about the marginalisation of Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Afro-Carribeans and working-class whites there seems to be a need to ensure that Leicester's faith sector can reach out to a wider range of religious traditions. This problem has been recognised by academic researchers,[15] who have said that to move forward Leicester's strategy for faith engagement needs to become more sensitive to the emergence of 'hyper-diversity', and to the needs of 'minorities within minorities'.

Leicester hosts an array of faith forums and dialogue groups, including a Council of Faiths (CoF), a Faith Leaders Forum and the respected St Philip's Centre. In contrast to Birmingham, the local council has a record of working closely with

[12] Steven Vertovec (1994) 'Multicultural, multi-Asian, multi-Muslim Leicester: Dimensions of Social Complexity, Ethnic Organization and Local Government Interface.' *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences* (7, 3: 259–274)

[13] Open Society Institute (2010) *Muslims in Leicester* (London: Open Society Institute)

[14] Rachel Chapman and Vivien Lowndes (2008) 'Faith in Governance? The Potential and Pitfalls of Involving Faith Groups in Urban Governance', *Planning, Practice & Research* (23, 1), page 66

[15] For example, Gurharpal Singh (2006) 'A City of Surprises: Urban Multiculturalism and the "Leicester Model"'. In *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain* (London: Hurst & Co, 291–304)

and offering financial assistance to interfaith networks. Manjula Sood, the Chair of the Council of Faiths, is a member of the mayor's cabinet. Even so, the faith forums face challenges. After two decades of steady growth, the CoF is suffering financially because of council cutbacks. It has been running at a deficit and was described by one council-worker as effectively 'moribund.' A number of interviewees, including the Bishop of Leicester, Tim Stephens, who convenes the Faith Leaders Forum, also feel their role is sometimes limited to symbolically promoting mutual tolerance at civic events. A local journalist says: 'hard conversations… don't always get well aired.' There is a perceived danger that the 'One Leicester' ethos of the inter-faith partnership may be sacrificing legitimate difference and disagreement at the altar of symbolic unity.

Tower Hamlets

The major faith actors in Tower Hamlets are the Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum (THIFF), the Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques (CoM), The East London Citizens Organisation (TELCO), and the Church of England Deanery and Diocesan structures. The East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre can be added to this list as a major faith actor in its own right, as it houses many activities and organisations that have influence throughout the borough, including Islamic Forum Europe and Muslim Aid. Indeed, the East London Mosque (ELM) is such an important actor that it is mentioned frequently in Tower Hamlets policy documents for its programmes in partnership with the Council and it is a common point of reference for other local organisations.

Previous research on how Islamic organisations contribute to the service provision and governance in Tower Hamlets emphasises the role of Islamists, and tends to be sceptical of their motives.[16] Delwar Hussain understands 'neo-liberal' changes in faith sector governance as being responsible for the ascendancy of the East London Mosque and its allies. As he puts it: 'faith communities are used to providing welfare services [due to] the retreating of the state from the public sphere [as] required by neo-liberal ideology. Ironically, the very thing which the state is concerned most about today—the increased assertiveness of Islamism—is the inevitable consequence of this policy.'[17] Eade and Garbin note that Islamist groups who provide services gain increasing credibility, both in local government and among the populace at large. Key examples of this are the highly competent Nafas Drugs Project[18] and the Osmani Trust. The successes of both have reflected well on the East London Mosque (ELM) and London Muslim Centre. The Brick Lane Mosque, frequently seen as a foil to the ELM, previously worked closely with the Bangladeshi Welfare Association in service delivery, although this organisation has remained dormant since 2009 due to internal disputes.

From the point of view of the Tower Hamlets council, Islamic institutions in the East End are key motivators of democratic engagement and participants in faith sector governance. The local council's preferred vehicle for various consultations and funding opportunities to Muslim groups has been the Council of Mosques (CoM), established in 2001. Partly through the influence of the CoM, the Somali-led Al-Huda mosque and the Darul Ummah mosque have become increasingly important. These institutions as well as the smaller Shahjalal and Hale Street mosques all received Prevent or Pathfinder funding. The infrastructure of the Council of Mosques and its closeness to the local council has helped smaller mosques develop their internal governance and amplify their contributions to local decision-making. A similar role has been played by TELCO, the local broad-based community organising network. TELCO founder Neil Jameson described a close relationship with the East London Mosque

[16] Sarah Glynn (2002) 'Bengali Muslims: The New East End Radicals?' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (25, 6: 969–988)

[17] D. Hussain (2007) 'Globalization, God and Galloway The Islamisization of Bangladeshi Communities in London', *Journal of Creative Communications* (*2*, 1-2), page 197

[18] John Eade and David Garbin (2006) 'Competing Visions of Identity and Space: Bangladeshi Muslims in Britain', *Contemporary South Asia* (15, 2: 181–193)

spanning over ten years, through which mosque leaders have learned tactics of political engagement. The Darul Ummah mosque is now a member of TELCO and through this network is developing an increasing sophistication in its political involvement.

The tendency to focus on mosques in an analysis of Tower Hamlets politics can obscure the roles of inter-faith forums and of other institutions, such as the NHS, which also often include Muslim participation. The Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum (THIFF) is easily the most prominent inter-faith group in the borough, mentioned often in Council publications.[19] THIFF is a non-hierarchical body initiated in 2002 to track religious hate crimes that went unreported. Since then, its activities have widened considerably, including organising Holocaust Memorial Day, offering online religious education resources, and providing key speakers for various events, such as the anti-EDL rally in September 2011. Despite these contributions, THIFF remains a small informal body. It receives no funding and its website was hacked in early 2012 leaving it inaccessible for several months. Every time we asked a Tower Hamlets interviewee about interfaith work, they mentioned Rev Alan Green, the long-time chair of THIFF. Green seems to singularly embody THIFF and the interfaith work of borough. He is regarded positively by almost everyone, although his public position and the relationships he has established with 'Islamists' can make him a lightening rod for criticism. When Green supported and spoke at the counter-EDL rally in 2011, he was criticised by those who thought it more sensible to urge residents to remain indoors.

Indeed, responses to the EDL's 2011 demonstration in Tower Hamlets bring out an interesting picture. Whilst the responses looked highly unified in most media accounts, the surface unity masked two factions, the first which counter-protested the EDL (Mayor Lutfur Rahman, THIFF, the ELM, and anti-fascist groups including UAF) and the second who urged staying indoors to avoid confrontation (the Brick Lane Mosque, the Labour group, local MPs), revealing the EDL to be less a threat to the borough than internal political strife.

Our three local cases vary in the political context and structure of faith sector governance. Even so, there are important commonalities. Interfaith work is of high symbolic value in each locality, yet subsists on little or no monetary support and seems to exert limited influence on local governance. Muslim organisations and individual actors have become integral parts of local representative bodies and faith sector networks in each local area and have contributed in important ways to equality advocacy and to service delivery. Attempts to dislodge such actors from their roles in the faith sector (e.g., due to alleged connections with Islamism) would be not only difficult but also counter-productive.

Faith in the Coalition since 2010: 'A Christian Country'

Following the May 2010 general election, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government with David Cameron at its helm. From the beginning this Coalition has sought to differentiate itself from New Labour in its approach to faith. In a speech commemorating the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, David Cameron offered an explicit and confident statement on the role of religion within British public and political life, arguing that although 'People often say politicians shouldn't 'do God,'' in fact, politicians should recognise 'both what our faith communities bring to our country... and also how incredibly important faith is to many people in Britain.'[20] By invoking and overturning Alistair Campbell's phrase 'we don't do God', the Prime Minister was attempting to put clear blue water between the Coalition and New Labour's position on the role of religion in public life. Indeed, the same 'doing God' message has

[19] St Ethelburga's, in the City of London, also has some local significance

[20] David Cameron (2011) 'Prime Minister's King James Bible Speech', 16/12/2011

been reiterated since then by government ministers.[21]

Yet, as we have already seen, New Labour actually *did* do God throughout all of its thirteen years in power. It engaged with faith more extensively and self-consciously than any previous modern British government. The coalition's interest in faith, then, should not be understood as a signal of a new era so much as a continuation of this trend.

That being said, David Cameron can justly argue that the content of his government's approach to faith differs from that of New Labour. The critical shift has been from a multi-faith paradigm to a Christian heritage focus. In the same King James Bible speech, Cameron locates Christianity at the centre of British public life: 'We are a Christian country. And we should not be afraid to say so.'[22] Public statements by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi have invoked the need to emphasise and protect Christian heritage in the face of encroaching secularism. In a speech to the Vatican, Warsi argued that 'Europe needs to be more confident in its Christianity.'[23] Relatedly, when a high court ruled that Christian prayers in the Bideford Town Council were unlawful, communities minister Eric Pickles intervened by expediting the 'general power of competence' for councils in the Localism Act 2011, and argued that this applies to a competence to continue to hold council prayers. Pickles saw this as necessary because 'for too long, the public sector has been used to marginalize and attack faith in public life, undermining the very foundations of the British nation.'[24] In a major speech in early 2013 he argued that 'in recent years long-standing British liberties of freedom of religion have been undermined by the intolerance aggressive secularism.'[25]

In all of these statements, key leaders in the Coalition seem to be attempting to correct a perceived discrimination against Christianity in Britain. Lobby groups such as Christian Concern and senior figures including Lord George Carey and Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali have argued that Christians are facing 'persecution' in British public life, particularly due to high profile legal cases.[26] Interestingly, Lord Rowan Williams, while Archbishop of Canterbury, expressed his dissatisfaction with the persecution argument.[27] But at least in certain wings of the Church of England and of the Conservative Party, the government's recognition of Britain's Christian heritage as valuable yet under threat has been welcomed. Unfortunately for the government, the constituencies who support its statements on Christianity overlap considerably with those who feel alienated by its proposals to introduce same-sex marriage.

In terms of policy, the Coalition has to a large degree brought engagement with the faith sector under the banner of the Big Society. In this respect, the coalition's emphasis on Christian heritage has been accompanied by a renewal of inter-faith work. Speaking at the AGM of the Inter Faith Network, the then DCLG junior minister Andrew Stunell explained that 'Inter faith activity is more important than ever in our work towards the Big Society, so I want to push for more inter-faith dialogue and action rather than individual faith groups delivering social projects.'[28] Near Neighbours, a new

[21] The message that the coalition 'does God' has been conveyed by minister Baroness Warsi in multiple statements and has been reiterated by communities minister Eric Pickles: 'Alastair Campbell declared 'we don't do God.' By contrast, I think this government does.' Eric Pickles (2012) 'A Christian Ethos Strengthens Our Nation' *The Telegraph,* 12/9/2012

[22] David Cameron (2011) 'Prime Minister's King James Bible Speech' 16/12/2011

[23] Baroness Sayeeda Warsi (2012) 'Militant Secularism Speech' 13/2/2012

[24] BBC News (2012) 'Councils Win Prayer 'Rights' as Localism Act Powers Fast Tracked, Ministers Say.' 18/2/2012. Available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17082136

[25] Eric Pickles (2013) 'Uniting our communities: integration in 2013', speech delivered to Policy Exchange and British Future event, 15.1.13, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uniting-our-communities-integration-in-2013

[26] See Michael Nazir-Ali (2012) *Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islamism and Multiculturalism* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum)

[27] Rowan Williams (2012) *Faith in the Public Sphere* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum)

[28] Andrew Stunell is a Liberal Democrat MP. During David Cameron's reshuffle in September 2012, he stepped down from his ministerial role at the Department of Communities and Local Government

programme funded by the DCLG, brings together the inter-faith and Christian heritage aspects of the Coalition's engagement with religion in a very interesting way, and is worthy of exploring in some detail.

The Near Neighbours Programme

Near Neighbours is a coalition initiative of £5 million to promote interactions across faith and non-faith groups. The programme was launched in Autumn 2011 in four urban centres across England: Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, and part of East London. About £3 million of the funds are designated for a set of larger bodies including the Christian Muslim Forum, the Council of Christians and Jews, the Hindu Christian Forum and the Feast, all of which do extensive work across faiths.[29] The Near Neighbours Fund portion, at £2 million, is devoted to small pots of money of between £250 and £5,000 given to local groups for projects that bring people of different backgrounds together through a simple application process. In many ways this Big Society initiative seems designed to give greater autonomy to faith groups and let local communities generate their own solutions. What is novel is that the programme is being administered by the Church Urban Fund, which allocates the Near Neighbours Fund, and applicants require the counter-signature of the vicar from the parish in which the proposed project will take place.

Church representative William Fittall has said of Near Neighbours: 'I think this is seen as one of the ways of moving forward perhaps in a slightly more constructive way than the government's Prevent agenda.'[30] Similarly Rowan Williams, interviewed while he was Archbishop of Canterbury, criticised Prevent for encouraging a view of Muslims as 'suspects.' When speaking about Near Neighbours he emphasised its constructive inter-faith elements:

> [Near Neighbours will] build on the major insights and priorities of the Christian Muslim Forum. That is, to put a bit of flesh on the claim that is sometimes made – indeed a claim I've sometimes made – that when people experience the Christian or Muslim 'other' as a neighbour, they're less likely to respond with paranoia or with projection. So it is a matter of asking: 'What's the common agenda? What are problems that neither group can solve alone?'

Various Church of England staff similarly spoke about Near Neighbours as a programme for mutual learning and social action, bringing together people of different faiths and those with no faith affiliation.[31] Canon Guy Wilkinson, who has had a central role in designing Near Neighbours, also described the programme in this manner. Yet he was careful to emphasise that it is fundamentally about a 'bi-lateral relationship' between government and the Church of England rather than 'multi-faith' work. In his view, 'when you've got nine religions around a table its very difficult to avoid descending into very generalised comments and statements… whereas when you are in a bilateral relationship… you get a depth of engagement.' In this respect Wilkinson sees Near Neighbours as marking an important shift:

> I think the uniqueness of the Near Neighbours programme lies in the way in which it has been accepted by government – and as far as I can tell by the faith communities – that a single faith, indeed a single denomination within the Christian faith, can properly work in the general interest, including the interests of other faith communities.

The strengthening bi-lateral relationship between government and the Church of England has been seen by minster Eric Pickles as one of the strengths of Near Neighbours. Pickles' department is responsible for the programme's funding and oversight. He describes it in this way: 'Christians also have the right to be heard

[29] Reverend Guy Wilkinson (Interview 9/2/2012)

[30] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8102811/Religiously-illiterate-politicians-treat-all-faiths-with-suspicion-says-CofE.html

by policy-makers. In my own government department, we have funded the Near Neighbours programme, working with the Church Urban Fund and its parish network to build stronger communities.' With the idea that Christians 'have the right to be heard,' Pickles is connecting Near Neighbours into the broader coalition narrative that the Christian heritage of Britain should be bolstered and defended.

Beyond its role in strengthening ties to the Church, Near Neighbours has proved valuable to the government for several reasons. It is a demonstration of the importance the Coalition has placed in localism, embodied in the somewhat bucolic idea of the parish churches as a centre of local community life. The programme is also notably inexpensive and light on bureaucratic 'red tape' because it is externally managed through a simple application process. And finally, Near Neighbours has been seen by some in government as a way of cultivating better governance within Muslim communities. Andrew Stunell MP, while a minister in the DCLG, described Near Neighbours in this way:

> The new faith communities… quite often, to be frank, are quite ramshackle in their governance and organisation. I mean, even at the most basic level, if a mosque isn't registered as a charity then donations to the mosque don't get tax rebates under the gift aid scheme. One of the projects we are funding this year is work for the Church of England in certain local areas to do some good practice sharing.

Similarly, Maqsood Ahmed who was a Muslim Advisor in the DCLG while the programme was being designed, spoke of Near Neighbours as a way for the mosques and other religious institutions to 'piggyback' on the Church of England and learn from its structures. Thus an interest in reforming and modernising Islam in the British context – an important theme in New Labour-initiated work such as the *Contextualising Islam in Britain* reports – seems to have remained as at least one of various motivations among actors within government. When taken together, central government and Church of England as stakeholder in Near Neighbours have had a variety of hopes and aspirations for the programme – from inter-faith mutual learning, to maintaining the relevance of the Church in changing demographic times, to implementing localist or reformative policies with limited resources in times of austerity.

Muslim Participation in Near Neighbours

The actions and motivations of the national figures that initiated Near Neighbours are, of course, only part of the story. From studying how Near Neighbours is implemented on the ground, further nuances emerge. We have conducted in-depth research in our local case study areas of Birmingham, Leicester, and Tower Hamlets, which happen to be three of the four Near Neighbours areas. The Near Neighbours programme coordinators in these areas and the central operational staff at the Church Urban Fund have all been meticulously careful to ensure that funding goes to a diverse set of faith, inter-faith, and non-faith groups, with a diversity of project participants. The Church of England's reputation with the programme, of course, stands or falls on the basis that it does not show favouritism. Muslim participation in Near Neighbours provides an intriguing case.

In terms of the lead-organisations that received Near Neighbours funds in its first year, Christian organisations (83) outnumbered Muslim organisations (21), at a rate of 4 to 1.[32] This is unsurprising, given that the programme is administered at parish-level and clergy are kept well informed about it. However in the average first-year Near Neighbours project, 39% of participants have been Muslim. This was largest proportion of any single faith group, greater

[31] Individuals describing Near Neighbours in this way included Tim Clapton (Interview), Jessica Foster (Interview), Elizabeth Carnelley (meeting)

[32] These figures, and all numbers and proportions included in this section, are from the short document prepared by Stephen Tunstall of the Church Urban Fund for our

than the 36% who were Christian. It seems that while the parish system may favour Christian groups as recipients of funding, the beneficiaries of Near Neighbours services and activities have to the largest extent been Muslims.[33]

The high level of Muslim participation in Near Neighbours projects reflects at least three dynamics – the selection of the four Near Neighbours Fund locations in areas of high Muslim concentration;[34] an interest among Christian clergy and inter-faith leaders in involving Muslims; and high levels of Muslim engagement that carry over from the investment by the previous government. Indeed, perhaps the most interesting aspect of Near Neighbours participation is that the typical project involves Muslims and Christians, but not necessarily people from other faiths. A total of only 7 projects in the programme's first year were led by organisations from 'other faiths,' which amounts to only third of the number led by Muslim organisations alone. New Labour's large-scale investment in Muslims, followed by the Coalition's investment Christianity, has perhaps helped facilitate a 'bipolar' environment of faith relations. This is not necessarily a criticism, but a reflection that central government's financial investment in the faith sector now follows the precedent of the Church of England's Christian Muslim Forum more than any other model.[35]

Muslim governance actors in the local areas we studied have had three kinds of reactions to Near Neighbours: critical, accepting or positive. One critic of the programme is Abdul-Rehman Malik, a public intellectual and journalist based in Tower Hamlets. Malik is deeply concerned about the Near Neighbours structure: 'Do you think Muslims know which parish they're part of?' he asked, incredulously, 'To me, it's undemocratic.' Ataullah Siddiqui of the Markfield Institute in Leicester noted that 'this government's funding policy has just the opposite of what the previous government's was [because] they want to channel money through the Church of England.' He added, 'now, I'm not sure if it is a good thing or a bad thing,' but it raises several questions:

> Does the government think the other faiths are not worthy of support? Or do they not want to support multicultural ideas?... I'm also concerned about how this will impact the Church itself. Because until recently the Church was, as far as the money from government is concerned, one of the many faith communities. Now it has seized the moment – they are the one now with the control and the power. So how do you relate to that? And what will the impact be?

Muhammad Abdul Aziz, former advisor to the DCLG, was much more critical of Near Neighbours on a variety of grounds. Firstly, he questioned the process by which Near Neighbours had come about:

> they gave a five million pound grant to the Church of England and to do this Near Neighbours thing. And I wasn't really happy at all about how it was processed in government actually, it was processed behind closed doors so nobody knew what was going on.

research project: Tunstall, S. 'Near Neighbours and Muslim Participation.' Church Urban Fund memo, 5 October 2012

[33] It is important to note that the largest number of lead-organisations in the first year of Near Neighbours have been classified as 'non-faith based' community groups. These accounted for the leadership of 156 projects, or over half of the 307 in total. It is also the case that some lead-organisations that might have been described as 'Muslim' have preferred to be included in a 'non-faith based' category (e.g., identifying as a Somali organisations). The figure of 21 Muslim-led projects, then, understates the number of projects that could be placed in this category (as do the figures for Christian-led and other faith-led projects, for similar reasons)

[34] Near Neighbours builds upon the Church of England's Presence & Engagement (P&E) programme. The Near Neighbours areas programme managers are based in four pre-existing P&E centres. A major goal of the P&E programme has been to maintain the relevance of the Church of England in areas where church attendance may be low and other religious groups, quite often Muslims, have grown numerically

[35] Indeed, the Christian Muslim Forum is a Presence & Engagement group that has been funded by Near Neighbours

Secondly, he questioned the rationale behind the Church of England's role in administering the programme:

> The argument that, you know, the Church of England has the greatest reach to the greatest diversity of communities because it has a church and a parish church and a school in every parish of the country and therefore it must be able to get at … it doesn't work with me. The church doesn't have a great tradition of reaching out into non-church communities.

Thirdly, he criticized the structure of Near Neighbours, specifically in terms of the membership of the Trust overseeing Near Neighbours and the decision not to constitute this as a multi-faith body

Dilwar Hussain, from the Policy Research Centre in Leicester and the Islamic Society of Britain, was generally supportive of the Near Neighbours programme but, like Siddiqui, Malik and Abdul Aziz questioned the mechanism by which it was delivered. He suggested that local councils would have been a better choice for distributing the funds because they operate in the 'civic space' that provides 'a more equal model.' In his view, Hindu groups in Leicester – which have been underrepresented in Near Neighbours Leicester funding thus far – would probably be more comfortable accessing the programme through the City Council. This criticism notwithstanding, Hussain has been positive about Near Neighbours and the work it is accomplishing.

A significant number of our interviewees, rather than praising or critiquing the Church's role in the programme, expressed a view of acceptance. Fozia Bora, an academic and former features editor for Q-News, stated that 'the fact of there being an established religion, I have no issue with that,' because Anglicanism has tended to promote, in her words, a 'discourse of live and let live.' Youth engagement worker Nurul Ullah, from the Darul Ummah mosque in Tower Hamlets, has been involved in two Near Neighbours projects. He accepts the way the programme is managed and extols the efficiency of the application process for providing funding within weeks.

Finally, some Muslim governance actors we interviewed spoke of Near Neighbours and the Church's role in it in highly positive terms. Maqsood Ahmed, who was involved in the DCLG development of the programme, believes that Near Neighbours provides a structure by which to support the development of other faith groups, including Muslims: '[The] Church of England is well established, they have a wonderful infrastructure. Why don't we use them as a kind of ground to get others involved?' Ibrahim Mogra, an imam in Leicester who is nationally prominent, likewise spoke of Church infrastructure as a major strength. He said it is a refreshing change from Prevent and could 'achieve the results that the Prevent agenda wanted to achieve, but it's more palatable.' Mogra placed his advocacy for the programme in the context of broader issues of faith in British public life:

> Look, we have to be realistic. The major player is the Church of England. I would want to make sure that the Church remains strong in this country because in that lies our safety. We can turn to them and they can take us under their safety net, if you like. If the Church of England falls, God help us, what's going to happen to the Muslims and Hindus and everybody else?

Mogra leads the MCB's committee on mosques and community affairs. He explained the longstanding position of the MCB has been to support the Church of England:

> The Muslim Council of Britain have supported the Church as the established church of this country. We have supported the presence of bishops in the Upper House. We're against the removal of bishops. We're happy to acknowledge that this is a predominantly Christian country. There is a very rich Christian heritage here.

Mogra's views are consonant with the findings of earlier research which shows that weak establishment of a national Church in England tends to be welcomed by leaders of Britain's diverse religious traditions, who see religious establishment as an inherent critique of strict secularism and as a facilitator of their inclusion.[36] Along these lines, in a recent article Cambridge Islamic scholar Abdal Hakim Murad has called for an '*alliance sacree*' between religious believers, arguing that:[37]

> If Europe defines itself constitutionally, as I believe it should, as either an essentially Christian entity, or as one which is at least founded in belief in God, then the fact of Muslim support for core principles of Christian ethics will give Islam a vital and appreciated place.

Near Neighbours, then, brings to the fore important questions about the establishment of the Church of England and its implications for religious minorities. The highly positive view of governance actors such as Ibrahim Mogra should be weighed against the critical questions of others on the programme's neutrality. Yet all or nearly all of the named governance actors in this section have in common a substantial track record of relationships and work with the Church of England. The British Muslim critics of Near Neighbours tend to be critical friends.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the growth of a faith sector during the New Labour government and at local level. It has demonstrated the deep embeddedness of Muslim faith leaders and organisations in local faith sector governance networks. In some cases these organisations contribute very substantially to faith-based social action, service delivery, and inter-faith relationships, as championed both by New Labour and by the Conservative-led coalition government. The coalition's vision of a Big Society powered by localism can be observed in action among inter-faith and Muslim networks in Birmingham, Leicester, and Tower Hamlets. In many cases, however, the work being done in these localities will not be sustainable or able to reach its potential without greater levels of financial investment from government.

Near Neighbours and similar programmes can continue to be a key part of such an investment, particularly to the degree that they are publicly accountable. In times when the proportion of the population identifying as Christian has fallen from 72 percent in 2001 to 59 percent in 2011, Near Neighbours does seem to be a success in terms of demonstrating the Church of England's vitality, creativity and perhaps unique position for brokering solutions to common problems. Yet, following this model, the government should be willing to experiment with other initiatives to achieve its Big Society. To create a hypothetical example: If a network of Muslims (or Buddhists, or Quakers) across the UK were to establish environmental social action centres in four local areas, seeking funding to promote sustainable living and environmental campaigning across barriers – would such a programme, if well managed, merit support?

The answer to this question relies on the willingness of government to prioritise investment in catalysing the Big Society. Perhaps more fundamentally, the answer relies on the government more clearly articulating what a 'Christian country' is understood to mean and how well it can accommodate the various strands of religious life in Britain. Professor Paul Weller has described Britain today as religiously 'three dimensional,' by which he means simultaneously Christian, secular, and multi-faith. In holding this balance together, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, the first Muslim to serve in Cabinet, can be a real asset to the Coalition and it would be unfortunate for government to be hesitant in deploying this 'secret weapon.'[38]

[36] Tariq Modood, ed. (1997) *Church, State and religious minorities*. Vol. 845 (London: Policy Studies Institute)

[37] Abdal Hakim Murad, 2013, *Can Liberalism Tolerate Islam*? Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/01/04/3664244.htm

[38] Mehdi Hasan (2012) 'Not a Dull Grey Man in a Suit' *The New Statesman*, 3 April 2012. While Sadiq Khan MP became the first Muslim to attend cabinet, as a minister for transport, he was not a member of the cabinet. Sayeeda Warsi served as Co-Chair of the Conservative Party from

Indeed, Muslims are not outliers but allies with other faith actors in supporting a religious presence in governance and public life. If the Christian heritage of Britain can continue to be successfully pluralised to incorporate minority faiths in a meaningful way, the government will find many willing allies and the Conservatives (or indeed the Liberal Democrats) will have greater hope to represent and appeal to Britons for the longer term.

May 2010-September 2012 and a member of David Cameron's cabinet

5

Participation & the Prevent Agenda

Introduction

In this chapter we analyse the development of state-Muslim engagement under the Prevent agenda. We focus on Prevent particularly because, from 2007, it became a key policy area through which Muslim participation in governance developed. The Prevent strategy when it was re-launched in 2007 set out a 'hearts and minds' approach to counter-terrorism, in which engagement and partnership with Muslims were seen as key to addressing (the causes of) violent extremism. In many ways it reflected broader approaches to governance under New Labour in terms of its focus on (faith) communities, and the establishment of partnerships between government, stake-holders and civil society actors. Prevent came to be widely criticised, however, with a key charge being that it securitised the state's engagement with Muslims. Indeed, many government and civil society actors in our study were critical of the ways in which Prevent was conceived and implemented, its impact on Muslim communities and the constraints it placed on Muslim civil society organisations' terms of engagement with government.

Nevertheless, the portrait of Prevent as a highly top-down, securitised and disciplinary model of state engagement with Muslims presents only a partial account of the ways in which Prevent operated in practice. In particular, there was considerable variation in the ways in which Prevent was both conceived and implemented across three dimensions. Firstly, different government departments operated with different understandings of Prevent. Secondly, there was considerable variation in the ways in which Prevent was implemented at local level, with local authorities and local statutory agencies exemplifying different logics and practices, which at times were at odds with how Prevent was conceived at national level. Our research suggests that this continues to be the case under the Coalition's new Prevent agenda. Thirdly, Muslim civil society actors were not merely subject to the Prevent agenda, but were actively involved in (re)shaping and contesting the implementation of Prevent.

We suggest that Prevent in many ways provides a revealing lens through which to view models and practices of state-Muslim engagement more broadly: New Labour's approach to Prevent exemplified its broader perspectives on the role of faith bodies in policy implementation, the significance of communities (framed by its community cohesion paradigm) and community engagement, as well as its sometimes ambivalent and inconsistent position on engaging directly with Muslims and Islam. By contrast, the Coalition's approach to Prevent sets out a much thinner conception of engagement, a focus on individuals and institutions rather than communities, much less but more focused funding, and a strong emphasis on 'muscular liberalism' in place of 'state multiculturalism'.

Under both governments, nevertheless, practices on the ground often diverge from centrally determined approaches, and we find clear evidence of both local authority and Muslim civil society agency operating in ways to re-shape Prevent.

'Winning hearts and minds': New Labour's approach to state-Muslim engagement under Prevent

The Prevent strategy that was announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2007,[1] was a renewed counter-radicalisation strategy that was developed in response to the London attacks in 2005, in which a 'hearts and minds' approach was thought necessary to counter a disturbing aspect of those attacks – which was that they had involved British Muslims rather than foreign operatives. It was also a strategy that was influenced by the then New Labour government's approach to community engagement across a range of policy fields, including urban regeneration, social exclusion, health and education, which emphasised stake-holder and user-group involvement in decision-making and delivery of services.[2] This was underpinned by a communitarian logic that saw communities as not just possessing the social capital and resources to achieve policy goals, but also attributed to them a responsibility to engage in governance and service delivery and to address policy problems such as anti-social behaviour or youth disaffection.[3] The mobilising of Muslim communities to partner with government to address radicalisation in many ways then resonated with this wider agenda. The development of Prevent was also shaped by New Labour's Community Cohesion paradigm. The New Labour government viewed Community Cohesion as essential to realising the goals of Prevent, with the DCLG suggesting 'that the arguments of violent extremists, which rely on creating a 'them' and 'us', are less likely to find traction in cohesive communities.'[4]

The Prevent strategy when it was re-launched in 2007 identified four key objectives that reflected these concerns, specified as: 'promoting shared values, supporting local solutions, building civic capacity and leadership and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders'.[5] As such, the 2007 strategy set out a focus on reforming particular aspects of the attitudes and practices of British Muslims through a series of interventions and reforms in areas such as religious and civic organisation (with the creation of MINAB[6] and projects providing theologically grounded counter-narratives to al-Qaeda inspired ideologies, such as the Radical Middle Way), political representation (with the creation of the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group and the Young Muslims Advisory Group in 2008) and youth and community work (with funding for numerous youth engagement, women's and counter-radicalisation projects at the local level). Through such interventions, the Labour government stated its desire to 'fundamentally rebalance our engagement'.[7]

The critique of Prevent

There was widespread criticism of the Prevent strategy under New Labour, most of which can be traced to the way it focused on Muslims. When the first 'Pathfinder' funding for Prevent was announced to local authorities by the DCLG it was requested that only authorities with a Muslim population of more than five percent (the national average was three) bid for the money. When the full strategy was rolled out, local authorities were funded in proportion to the number of Muslim residents.[8] The strategy, which ignored far-Right and other forms of extremism, seemed then to constitute Muslim

[1] DCLG (2007) *Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds* (London: Department of Communities and Local Government)

[2] Rob Imrie and Mike Raco (2003) 'Community and the changing nature of urban policy' in R. Imrie and M. Raco (eds.), *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, community and urban policy* (Bristol: Policy Press)

[3] Ash Amin (2005) 'Local Community on Trial' in *Economy and Society* (34: 1; 612-633)

[4] DCLG (2008) *Delivering Prevent – Responding to Learning* (London: Department of Communities and Local Government); pp. 6-7

[5] DCLG (2007) ibid; p. 5

[6] The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board; see: http://www.minab.org.uk/

[7] DCLG (2007); ibid; p. 9

presence itself as a security risk, and to imply that British Muslims in general were 'flawed citizens' in need of alteration.[9] A former senior equalities civil servant, Waqar Azmi, commented:

> I advised senior people in government at that time that the approach we were taking is wrong. That we shouldn't be saying that this is a Muslim problem. We shouldn't be saying that Islam is a problem. […] if you were to do that then the very communities that we need in order to deal with this issue will not be with us.

Attesting to these implications of Prevent, Humera Khan, a prominent Muslim campaigner and co-founder of An-Nisa,[10] a Muslim women's charity, argued: 'The Prevent policy has further demonised the Muslim community, as if we are all responsible for terrorism.'

A further line of criticism focused on the blurring between Prevent and the Community Cohesion agenda.[11] For example, Muhammad Abdul Bari, Chair of the East London Mosque and former Secretary General of the MCB, told us: 'The Prevent Agenda, it's the Home Office one. CLG is about Community Cohesion. And Community Cohesion shouldn't be conflated with security. But in our opinion CLG conflated these two issues.' Critics have argued this overlap undermined both agendas – with Prevent perceived as unfocussed and Cohesion as securitised.[12] Indeed, this view informed the latest iteration of the Prevent agenda that was announced by the Coalition government in 2011, in which it was announced that from now on, Prevent and Cohesion will be kept separate.

New Labour's hearts and minds approach to Prevent was viewed with a great deal of suspicion by those Muslim communities with whom government sought to partner, who tended to see it as a mechanism for the surveillance of Muslim populations,[13] or, as one contributor to a House of Commons committee put it, as 'Pursue in sheep's clothing'.[14] Thus, there was widespread suspicion that Prevent funding was being used to gather information on Muslim communities.[15] The suggestion that this was official policy was denied by the DCLG,[16] but some youth workers and councillors who were involved with Prevent reported that they felt coerced into providing information about individuals,[17] with some claiming that local government was under pressure to become 'an agency of the intelligence service'.[18]

The focus of Prevent on reforming Muslim hearts and minds tended to neglect the range of sources of disaffection (such as UK foreign policy), and the enduring material inequalities disproportionately experienced by Muslims, that undermine engagement initiatives and feed into radicalisation narratives. Thus, the 2007 strategy's four objectives focused on activities such as: the inclusion of citizenship education within madrassahs and Muslim supplementary schools; 'tackling violent extremism roadshows'; guidance for universities on dealing with radicalisers; or training and improving the English language skills of imams. There was little in this strategy on issues such as tackling educational and labour market disadvantages among Muslims. Furthermore, engagement

[8] Arun Kundnani (2009) *Spooked: How Not To Prevent Violent Extremism* (London: Institute of Race Relations), pp.13–14.

[9] Yahya Birt (2011) 'Governing Muslims After 9/11' in *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (eds.) (New York: Hurst), pp. 117-128. Derek Mcghee (2008) *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights* (Maidenhead: Open University Press)

[10] See: http://www.an-nisa.org/

[11] Charles Husband and Yunis Alam (2011) *Social Cohesion and Counter-Terrorism: A Policy Contradiction?* (Bristol: Policy Press)

[12] Paul Thomas (2010) 'Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme' in *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (12, 3: 442-458)

[13] Arun Kundnani (2009) ibid; Yahya Birt (2009) 'Promoting Virulent Envy?', *The RUSI Journal* (154: 4, 52-58)

[14] Communities and Local Government Committee (2010) *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009–10* (London: House of Commons), p. 8

[15] Arun Kundnani (2009) ibid, p.15

[16] Communities and Local Government Committee (2010) ibid; p.3

[17] Kundnani (2009) ibid., pp.28–29

[18] A councillor quoted in Husband and Alam (2011), ibid, p.146

initiatives were attacked for not being open to critical discussion of UK foreign policy.[19]

The community engagement-based approach to tackling extremism that was pursued within Prevent tended to offer a limited and securitised model of state-Muslim engagement, in which Muslim community organisations, mosques, women's and youth groups were engaged with on often constrained terms, with little opportunity to define the nature of the problem. One national advisor to the DCLG and Special Advisor to the House of Commons Prevent Enquiry, Alveena Malik stated to us in interview: 'Equality and diversity wasn't seen as an issue. It wasn't seen as certainly a solution. It was around how do we deradicalise?' And, for those who objected to this agenda, she recalled: 'there was this burden of responsibility and blame that we had to deal with, which I found really difficult, which I rejected […] those of us who didn't toe the line, we were shunned and silenced.'

Such concerns about the lack of substantive consultation and security-led nature of engagement through Prevent were expressed at the local level too. For instance, in Birmingham, this arose in relation to the posting of a police officer, on secondment from the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU), as the Prevent Programme Manager for Birmingham, in the Equalities Directorate of Birmingham City Council.[20] As one community activist in Birmingham, Jahan Mahmood, commented:

> Locally we've had a controversial issue with a police officer […] who was seconded into the Council. I can remember clearly very early on, members of the youth inclusion project […] said that it increased their own suspicions of why *he* was involved in it. […] And the very first question they were posing to [him] was, 'This is security-led, intelligence-led. Otherwise you wouldn't be here'.

Different logics of engagement within Prevent

Notwithstanding this critique of Prevent, our research suggests there were significant differences in the understanding of the objectives and practices of Prevent across government departments, and between national and local levels of government. Furthermore, Muslim participants in Prevent initiatives sometimes played a role in (re)shaping the Prevent agenda or in contesting it.

Logics of engagement across government departments

In our interviews with politicians, policy advisors and civil servants involved in the formulation and delivery of Prevent under New Labour, it was apparent that government departments had sometimes quite different perspectives on the significance of community engagement under Prevent.[21] So, one then Senior Advisor to the DCLG and Home Office, Maqsood Ahmed, suggested that he saw his role as promoting a more nuanced approach to Muslim community engagement within Prevent:

> I was involved in the Prevent and when I say Prevent, it was less to do with the counter-terrorism, more to do with how do we establish connection with the Muslim community? How do we capacity build in the community for the community leadership fund and how do we engage with young Muslims? How do we engage with the Muslim women? […] and also, how do we go beyond – this is my terminology – beyond the 'usual suspects' who are always on the Government table?

By contrast, a senior civil servant who had been involved in the implementation of Prevent within the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), suggested:

[19] And see Shane Brighton (2007) 'British Muslims, multiculturalism and UK foreign policy: 'integration' and 'cohesion' in and beyond the state' in *International Affairs* (83, 1: 1-17); and Jay Edwards and Benoît Gomis (2011) *Islamic Terrorism in the UK since 9/11: Reassessing the 'Soft' Response,* International Security Programme Paper - ISP PP 2011/03 (London: Chatham House)

[20] House of Commons (2010) ibid; p. 12

[21] And see Thomas (2010), ibid.

> In the early days, I had no idea that this job would involve community engagement. There were a few reasons for that: one, no-one had told me, and two, the organisation was new and we hadn't designed it into the principles. I suppose three, actually, the Department of Communities and Local Government, DCLG, regarded it as their job to have those contacts: to the point where they didn't particularly want us to have them. I think if truth be told, they were also slightly apprehensive that we would come in with size 12 security boots and sort of damage the contacts that they were creating.

The same OSCT senior civil servant noted that whilst they had intended to build on the existing infrastructure of community engagement initiatives that had been set up by the DCLG under the Community Cohesion agenda, Prevent had eventually come to displace these. His explanation for this was that the existing infrastructure set up by the DCLG was in reality underdeveloped:

> We made a fundamental mistake three years ago with Prevent. I thought that we would be able to place Prevent on top of a rich scene of dialogue with Muslim communities. My mistake was that that scene didn't exist and Prevent assumed disproportionate importance.

According to former DCLG Minister John Denham 'I found in the CLG, after some very rigorous examinations with officials, that there was no understood model of how Prevent was meant to work.' The senior civil servant in the OSCT explained that Prevent ultimately displaced Community Cohesion because the OSCT had more resources and power than the DCLG:

> Because we arrived in a rather security-like way with a very determined delivery plan, occasionally people were just run off the court. They didn't have as much money. They didn't, frankly, have as much drive. They didn't quite know what they were doing. And it was hard. So what happened was Prevent took over Cohesion.

In addition to these differences between DCLG and OSCT perspectives on Prevent, there were sometimes inconsistent approaches within government particularly on the question of which Muslim groups should be engaged with. As former Home Secretary Charles Clarke (2004-6) reflected:

> there was not a clear approach to what needed to be done, […] there was confusion over some leaders of some of the communities and, in particular, confusion about the extent to which we should, in any sense, compromise with some of the forces which have deep, deep, deep roots and a lack of appreciation of the nature of our democratic society in which we live [...] I do think it was an issue where we didn't have a coherence about what we thought was the right way of dealing with this question.

This was reflected in the variable relationship between the New Labour government and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB),[22] which one former advisor to the DCLG, Francis Davis, attributed to a lack of a clear principle governing the terms of inclusion of Muslim organisations:

> there's no real kind of clear basis upon which one can decide who's in and who's out. So you get Hazel [Blears] throwing MCB out and you get John [Denham] and the team working very hard to get them back in…

Local variation

At a local level, initiatives and practices associated with Prevent also varied considerably, with some local authorities refusing to implement Prevent, others implementing Prevent only in modified form, and some authorities using the vagueness within the policy to pursue fairly autonomous objectives – so that a wide variety of community projects came to be funded with Prevent monies.

[22] See Vidino, Lorenzo (2011) London's Frantic Quest for the Muslim Holy Grail: The Post-9⁄11 Evolution of the Relationship Between Whitehall and the British Muslim Community', *Religion Compass* (5, 4: 129-138)

For instance, Leicester City Council was a recipient of Prevent funding, but jettisoned the term 'Prevent' in its implementation of the strategy, renaming it 'Mainstreaming Moderation'[23] to lessen its emphasis on Muslims and to focus on all forms of extremism – despite local perceptions of opposition from central government to focusing in this way. Consequently, one local Muslim activist in Leicester, and a member of the Mainstreaming Moderation forum, Batool al-Toma, commented: 'Leicester tended to take a whole different approach to the whole thing. […] the money came in under the Prevent agenda – that was well known – but Leicester tended to unpack that […] so you didn't feel like […] you were under the whole national Prevent agenda'.

Bristol City Council also renamed its Prevent programme as 'Building the Bridge',[24] in which the security paradigm that informed the national Prevent strategy was subsumed under the goal of building relationships across Bristol's diverse Muslim groups, and between long-established and newly-settled groups in the city and Bristol City Council.

In Bradford, the local Council refused to accept Prevent funding altogether, on the grounds that it would damage its Community Cohesion work. Although they later received Prevent funding, the then leader of the Council, Kris Hopkins, suggested they used it for other ends:

> And so you ended up with a situation where we [Bradford Council] were out there already trying to lead, trying to gain the confidence of a very fragile community through PR interventions around Community Cohesion, and at the same time we were being asked to be an arm of the security services, to respond under the direction of the NI35 directives.[25] And we just refused to play. And they said well you can't have the Prevent money unless you play, so we said we don't want the Prevent money. Keep your Prevent money, we'll spend our own reserves to do more Community Cohesion work. And eventually they gave us the Prevent money anyway.

In Tower Hamlets, a Tavistock Institute evaluation[26] of the implementation of Prevent there found different agencies locally operating with different understandings of the causes of radicalisation, with implications for the implementation of Prevent, with the equalities team focused on social causes of radicalisation, the police on profiling individuals and youth services on external causes – namely foreign policy. As the current local Prevent Manager in Tower Hamlets, Nojmul Hussain, reflected, under Labour: 'Prevent was led very autonomously to a large degree… Tower Hamlets was very autonomous', despite the reporting requirements under NI35, he suggested: 'each local authority took it in some way which it felt was best'.[27]

The lack of a clear focus in the remit of Prevent, its entanglement with Community Cohesion, and the decentralised and localised nature of Prevent delivery, gave local authorities a fairly high level of autonomy in determining how Prevent was delivered, facilitating innovations in a wide variety of forms of engagement. In Tower Hamlets, for example, the Local Authority held an open community consultation process to set their priorities and solicit project bids for its Prevent funds. Of the 28 projects that received funding, only four had any direct connection with the 'hard edge' of extremism, whilst the others were aimed at community engagement,

[23] See House of Commons (2010) ibid: 'Preventing Violent Extremism - Communities and Local Government Committee Memorandum from Leicester City Council (PVE 29)': http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65we23.htm

[24] See: http://www.allmosquestogether.org/building-the-bridge/

[25] NI35 required Local Authorities to monitor progress towards 'building resistance to violent extremism', see http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance-information/performance-data-collections-and-guidance/nis/Pages/NI035Buildingresiliencetoviolentextremism.aspx

[26] Giorgia Iacopini, Laura Stock and Kerstin Junge (2011) Evaluation of Tower Hamlets Prevent Projects (London: The Tavistock Institute)

[27] Hussain is the current Prevent manager for Tower Hamlets (during the New Labour strategy the Prevent manager was Habib Hoque-Habib). His words express how the implementation of the strategy has been commonly

Community Cohesion, infrastructure or trust building projects with local organisations; e.g., offering the first *khutba* sermons in sign language to enable deaf Muslims to attend the East London Mosque, or providing boxing classes at the Osmani Trust to foster discipline among Muslim young men. This decentralised approach meant that localities could rework Prevent to make it more palatable to local groups. It also meant that the agenda could be perceived as simply offering 'Muslim money' to those community organisations that could master its language.[28]

Muslim civil society responses

Prevent under New Labour exemplified a model of governance that emphasised engagement with Muslims, although with an often narrow and limited offer of participation. Despite this, under Prevent, an infrastructure of Muslim civil society organisations developed with new institutions, networks and structures of engagement with local authorities and women's and youth initiatives in particular identified by many of our respondents as activities enabled by Prevent funding that had positive effects.

In certain cases, participants in Prevent negotiated the terms of their involvement, sometimes drawing on their capacities and expertise in working with Muslim communities or 'hard to reach groups' to refocus their activity on what they regarded as more core objectives, such as community development, regardless of, or in opposition to, Prevent objectives. For instance, Abdul Haqq Baker, organiser of the STREET (Strategy to Reach, Educate and Empower Teenagers) project in Brixton, stated:

> STREET, I think, became a very powerful tool to show the effective engagement and partnership, especially partnership, with Government entities, whether they be local or central, and NGO institutions was possible. But the key area here was that it was negotiated on equal terms. There were some terms that I would not accept from local partners […] e.g. the police and other statutory organisations saying you need to inform them and provide reports on your target audience. I said I won't do that, that's not going to happen, and I'm prepared to walk away from any agreement on that basis, because of the confidentiality, because of the credibility that we've got with such individuals.

A number of respondents noted that the exercise of such autonomy was particularly evident during the more open-ended Pathfinder year of 2007-8. As Humera Khan of An-Nisa suggested:

> we took money in the Pathfinder year. We were persuaded by our youth service and diversity team, because they didn't have anybody else who had the ability to run a project. [...] We said we would only do it on the condition that it's not sold as a Prevent project. We're not going to do Prevent work, we're going to do community development [...] we want it to be as a basis to start a dialogue with you as a council...

Although the decentralised nature of Prevent facilitated the profusion and growth of Muslim civil society organisations, many were critical of the short-term nature of this funding stream. Humera Khan argued 'there's never been lasting investment in the Muslim voluntary sector' and described Prevent monies as a 'bottomless pit' that did not establish anything sustainable. A similar point was made by Abdul-Rehman Malik of the Radical Middle Way who suggested 'The problem, of course, with the whole model of the previous Prevent was that… the CLG was much more interested in what events and programmes have you done, rather than what long-term engagement you've had'. Many of our respondents were concerned about the Muslim focus of Prevent funding. As Ataullah Siddiqui, a local activist in Leicester and one of the founders of Leicester Council of Faiths and the Christian Muslim Forum, commented: 'people are giving money, Prevent money, but with a label on the community […] I wish somebody

understood within One Tower Hamlets team that includes Prevent.

[28] Vivien Lowndes and Leila Thorp (2010) 'Preventing violent extremism – why local context matters' in R.Eatwell and M.J. Goodwin, eds., The new extremism in 21st century Britain (London: Routledge, pp. 124–141)

would take that label away from us. It not worth even a penny', particularly as in his view 'those monies have not benefitted the community'. Nonetheless, Abdul-Rehman Malik of the Radical Middle Way noted, in hindsight, 'Of course now, quietly, everyone realises that, with all the palaver we went through with Prevent, this is the largest single investment that the Muslim community will ever see.'

In some areas, Prevent became a much more contested, and challenged, activity. This was particularly the case in Birmingham, not least as a consequence of the introduction of, and campaign against, 'Project Champion'. Although not itself a Prevent project, Project Champion had serious implications for the local implementation of Prevent in the city. 'Project Champion' was a West Midlands Police initiative that involved the installation of 216 CCTV and ANPR (Automatic Number Place Recognition) cameras primarily in two areas of Muslim settlement – Sparkbrook and Washwood Heath – for enhanced surveillance (with seven other adjacent wards affected), in effect creating a 'surveillance ring' around these areas. Although initially announced as a crime safety initiative, and ostensibly under the auspices of the Safer Birmingham Partnership, a campaign group of local residents, civil liberty campaigners and Muslim activists, in alliance with local Councillors and journalists, revealed that Project Champion was in fact a counter-terrorism police initiative, led by ACPO(TAM) (Association of Chief Police Officers – Terrorism and Allied Matters), which had drawn down £3 million of Home Office funding for the scheme. The fact that it had been launched without community consultation and with its counter-terrorism purpose effectively concealed,[29] led to a very public outcry and to Assistant Chief Constable Sharon Rowe of West Midlands Police issuing a public apology to a meeting of community groups on 4th July 2010.[30] A subsequent Birmingham City Council report on Project Champion[31] stated that the Council had not been fully informed about its counter-terrorism purpose – i.e. that it too had been misled. An external report by Thames Valley Police[32] established that the data gathered by the Project Champion cameras was for use solely by the Counter Terrorism Unit, with no mechanism in place for sharing that data with local policing units in order to combat crime.[33]

Whilst the campaign against Project Champion was successful in exposing the real purposes behind the cameras and ultimately in forcing their removal, Project Champion did much to intensify local anxieties about Prevent as a surveillance programme. For example, Jahan Mahmood, a local community activist, explained Prevent is seen as: 'a government program that's spying on Muslims. That's the local perception, which is they're spying on us, because of the cameras of course'. Muslim organisations and actors in Birmingham became increasingly reluctant to engage with Prevent at all, with the result, in Mahmood's words, that 'Prevent is dead in this city'. This perspective was corroborated by other local actors. For instance, Yousiff Meah, a former Head of Youth Services at Birmingham City Council, a PVE project leader during the Pathfinder year and current Director of the Recora Institute, commented: 'the whole argument about cameras and CCTV. It was a very obvious symbol of and a focus for debate in communities around spying and distrust'. Since then, there has been

[29] A Thames Valley Police Report (2010) highlighted evidence of an explicit strategy of concealment of the counter-terrorism purposes of the cameras from the wider public. See *Project Champion Review*; 30th September 2010 (London: Thames Valley Police)

[30] See Birmingham Mail, 5.7.2010: http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/police-apologise-for-birmingham-spy-camera-127653

[31] Birmingham City Council (2010) *Project Champion: Scrutiny Review into ANPR and CCTV Cameras: A report from Overview & Scrutiny*, 2nd November 2010, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham

[32] Thames Valley Police (2010) ibid

[33] The Thames Valley Police Report (2010) ibid revealed that Project Champion could not have been used for the purposes of local crime prevention, because there were no arrangements in place to share the data with local crime prevention officers. It concluded: 'In simple terms, the CTU built a system to provide them with enhanced operational capability and this privileged position was not matched by a similarly robust structure to ensure the delivery of the community benefits that had been promised to the people of Birmingham; it was a one-sided plan." (p. 31)

reluctance on the part of community groups to engage with Prevent in Birmingham. One response to this loss of trust in Prevent has been the attempt by Muslim civil society actors in Birmingham to establish an alternative, non-governmental, Prevent-style counter-radicalisation programme that explicitly eschews government funding or involvement and is implemented by community activists themselves.

Prevent under the Coalition

On coming to power in 2010, the Coalition government announced an immediate review of Prevent. The new strategy that was announced in 2011 marked several notable changes in the government's approach to Prevent: firstly, it responded to the critique of the overlap between Prevent and Cohesion activity by stipulating that Prevent and cohesion/integration work would be kept separate, with the Home Office leading on Prevent and the DCLG focussing on cohesion and integration. Secondly, it moved away from the problematic focus of the previous strategy on numbers of Muslims as a criterion for targeting government funding, to using intelligence on Al-Qaeda related activity. Thirdly, it announced that the Prevent agenda will 'address all forms of terrorism',[34] including far-right, Irish republican and animal rights, and not just Al-Qaeda inspired, terrorism. Fourthly, funding for Prevent projects would be more tightly, and centrally, controlled. Fifthly, the new strategy extended its focus from tackling 'the ideological challenge of terrorism', and on working with individuals who might be drawn into terrorism, to working with 'sectors and institutions' – in effect placing responsibility on front-line staff in the education, health, faith, charities and criminal justice sectors to become actively involved in tackling radicalisation. Finally, government will focus on tackling non-violent, as well as violent, extremism: 'intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity',[35] suggesting government views espousing non-violent extremist ideas as a potential precursor to becoming involved in terrorism. This last stipulation echoes Cameron's earlier 'Munich speech' of February 2011, in which he advocated 'muscular liberalism' in place of 'state multiculturalism' and declared that 'instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and as societies – have got to confront it, in all its forms'.[36]

Whilst certain reforms in the Coalition's new Prevent strategy are helpful in addressing some of the problematic logics of the previous strategy, there are difficulties facing its implementation, and specifically in relation to the proposed separation between Prevent and cohesion. Our data suggest that actors charged with the delivery of Prevent are sceptical about this separation. This arises partly as a consequence of the perceived operational difficulties in disentangling these strategies, particularly because in many areas, there is overlap in personnel delivering Prevent and cohesion and integration strategies. For some this is regarded as beneficial to the delivery of Prevent. For example, one police officer suggested that in his local area:

> we have been fortunate in a sense because the lead for Prevent has come out of the Community Cohesion and Diversities unit, so there has been a natural link in there that we have held on to and we still operationalise. And it's virtually the same individuals who are involved in the cohesion bit that are predominantly involved in the Prevent.

Such scepticism is also based on normative objections to separating Prevent and cohesion, however, with many local actors viewing a cohesion and integration strategy and community engagement as fundamentally necessary for the delivery of Prevent. Thus in practice, there remains considerable overlap

[34] Home Office (2011) ibid, p. 6

[35] Home Office (2011) ibid

[36] Cameron, David (2011) *PM's Speech at Munich Conference*, 5-2-11, available at: http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/

locally between Prevent and Cohesion work. For example, in Tower Hamlets implementation of Prevent comes under the remit of the 'One Tower Hamlets' team, which was, and still is, responsible for equalities, cohesion and third sector engagement. Thus overlap is reflected in programmes that have simultaneously Prevent and cohesion objectives, such as the *No Place for Hate* programme, which aims to exclude religious extremist speakers from local venues as well as emphasise local unity in the face of threats to cohesion, such as from the EDL. Frances Jones, who leads One Tower Hamlets, described *No Place for Hate* in a way that demonstrates this overlap: 'it's totally a cohesion thing… [but] it's often moving into the territory of somebody coming and saying something that's extreme and potentially violent.'

This cross-over is perhaps even more evident in Leicester, where the city's Prevent programme is now being delivered by a local interfaith institution – the St Philip's Centre[37] – rather than from within Leicester City Council. St Philips' Centre's approach to Prevent locates it firmly within its concerns with integration and inter-faith work and it is also responsible for delivering the Coalition government's Near Neighbours programme – an initiative that seeks to encourage interactions between religious and ethnic communities. On announcing its new role in delivering the Prevent programme in Leicester, the St Philip's Centre stated that it 'was chosen to lead this work because of its excellent national reputation, particularly around integration and building good inter-faith relations'.[38] As the Faith Training Development Manager at St Philip's, Riaz Ravat, explained:

> we are going to be doing this from St Philip's which is an organisation which has developed its reputation on interfaith relationships. The Home Office knows that and is happy with that. […] we are an independent charity, we're working with Government, we're working with the Council, with the Police. We are not downplaying our interfaith credentials or our role in building interfaith relationships just because of Prevent or not because of Prevent. It's part of the package. That's who we are, you either embrace it or you don't: and thankfully they've embraced it.

In Leicester, then, the possibility of disentangling Prevent and cohesion seems unlikely. As Ravat confirmed:

> I think there's definitely an overlap between the two. […] Whether you call it cohesion or integration, it's part of the same, so I think these are probably Whitehall debates and discussions which they can carry on having, but we've got to get on with the job.

In addition, the Coalition government's rhetorical stance on 'muscular liberalism', with its stipulations regarding eschewing engagement with non-violent extremists (i.e. 'Islamists'), potentially narrows the terms of engagement with Muslims, limiting local authorities' engagement with a range of key organisations and partners. This has significant implications in Tower Hamlets, where 'Islamist' organisations, such as the East London Mosque (ELM), are deeply embedded in local governance networks and forums and key to the delivery of local priorities. Dis-embedding such institutions would be not just difficult, but potentially counter-productive. Indeed, if organisations founded or connected with the mosque and its members are taken into account (IFE, Osmani Trust, Nafas Drugs Project, Muslim Women's Collective, etc) then it is by far the largest local non-governmental provider of local services and education as well as cultural and political activity. Key to this is the fact that the ELM has the private funding and clout to ensure that it does not need to cater to government agendas in the way that smaller organisations might feel compelled.[39] Thus, despite the accusations of

[37] See: http://stphilipscentre.dioceseofleicester.com/

[38] St Philip's Centre (2012) *Prevent: Serving the Needs of the Community to Reduce the Risks from Extremism*, (Leicester: St Philip's Centre) available at: http://stphilipscentre.dioceseofleicester.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Prevent-Document3.pdf; p. 1

[39] Interview with Shaynul Khan.

extremism levelled at ELM by journalists and bloggers, and the Coalition's stance on engagement with Islamists more broadly, the ELM would be hard to dislodge as a key local institution, and this would not be in the best interest of local government. Indeed, some actors are doubtful that the line on refusing to engage with Islamists is either workable or abided by, as one advisor to government commented:

> The places where people are a little bit sceptical, or even baffled, is how you're going to do some of the stuff around […] muscular liberalism, tough talking on extremism and so on, when the Home Office is still working with the very same groups that Cameron said "We will not work with these groups". I just went to a meeting two weeks ago and the Home Office is still working with those groups. […] if you want to reach hardline Salafi communities, you have to work with hardline Salafi people, that's just the way it is. You're not going to reach them through cuddly Sufis. There's a sense of *realpolitik* about this whole thing…

He went on to suggest, however, that the more limited and lower profile Prevent strategy pursued under the Coalition government has been a positive development, and for that reason 'the situation now ironically is more positive under a Tory government than it was three years ago under a Labour government.'

Conclusion

We have suggested that in many ways Prevent provides a revealing lens through which to analyse the dynamics of state-Muslim engagement more broadly. Engagement with Muslims, constituted as 'communities', was a key aspect of New Labour's approach to Prevent, and this resonated with its wider approach to the governance of Muslims, communities and ethnic and cultural diversity. In so doing, New Labour included and recognised a diverse range of Muslim civil society organisations: within governance, in legislation and in policy. The offer of participation was often criticised as a limited one, which encountered contestation and unintended consequences along the way. New Labour's engagement with Muslims was sometimes ambivalent (for instance with regard to working with 'Islamists') or inconsistent (e.g. its relationship with the Muslim Council of Britain), with different departments exhibiting different policy logics (as discussed above), and marked by a certain amount of trial and error. Nevertheless, under New Labour, there was a quasi-institutionalisation of a wide range of Muslim organisations and actors within governance, including through Prevent: the weight of criticism levelled against it notwithstanding.

By contrast, the Coalition's approach to Prevent operates with a thinner model of engagement. Its Prevent strategy says rather little directly about working with Muslim groups, and more about working with personnel in key sectors such as in health, education or prisons. Its recent announcements on integration suggest a more strident and potentially restrictive view of integration and national identity, underpinned, rhetorically at least, by a commitment to 'muscular liberalism'. That stance is reflected in its Prevent strategy in the stipulation that government must not engage with those Muslim groups who do not subscribe to liberal values. The Coalition's recently published integration strategy[40] foregrounds the role of local authorities in driving integration, in line with its general stance on localism, but this strategy conveys little substantively about what integration consists of. In line with funding contractions elsewhere, there is relatively little funding for either integration or Prevent initiatives. The Coalition seems, then, to espouse an assertive and restrictive, although thinner, stance on both integration and engagement with Muslims. Our data suggest that at the local level, both Local Authorities, local statutory agencies and Muslim civil society actors, whose participation in the Prevent agenda are necessary for its implementation, operate with often very different perspectives on Prevent and the terms of state-Muslim

[40] DCLG (2012) *Creating the Conditions for Integration* (London: Department of Communities and Local Government)

engagement, such that there is, and will continue to be, substantial local variation in the implementation of Prevent.

6

Conclusion

Taking Part

In this report, we have suggested that Muslim participation in governance has been significant and increasing over the last few decades, and that this is especially evident in campaigns over equalities and the recognition of Muslim distinctiveness within legislation and social policy. This participation has been facilitated by, as well as centred on, developments within national level legislation and policy. It has also arisen as a consequence of shifts that have been taking place in governance towards more decentralised and networked forms of decision-making and service delivery. In such governance arrangements, there has been an increasing focus on, and engagement with, faith-based organisations, which are often posited as crucial for policy goals such as community cohesion, integration, and active citizenship more broadly. Faith based organisations have also increasingly been viewed by government as important in terms of the repositories of resources and social capital that they possess or their reach into hard to access communities. Nationally and locally, there has been a growing engagement with faith, with references to 'faith communities' as symbolic markers of diversity, and the inclusion of faith actors within governance networks and partnerships. Muslim participation in governance specifically has also been framed by a security-focused engagement agenda, in which partnering and engagement with Muslim communities has been viewed as key to tackling radicalisation. Often, the latter agenda has been regarded as the key driver of state's engagement with Muslims. As we have argued here, security concerns have been profound in shaping, in frequently problematic ways, the modes of engagement with Muslims. Yet we maintain that the security agenda is certainly not the sole driver of such engagement.

For these reasons, and across a range of policy domains, Muslims have been increasingly active and effective within governance. The significance of such participation can be evaluated across three dimensions: presence, voice and impact.

Presence

In terms of presence of Muslims in governance, we suggest that beneath headline data on Muslim Parliamentarians, which has been characterised by rather slow progress, there has been a steady increase in Muslim presence on governance through faith-based initiatives, more participatory local governance structures and as consequence of a need to find representative bodies with whom government could consult on issues relating to cohesion, equalities, integration and security. In terms of the search for Muslim interlocutors, our research finds a growing nuance and sophistication on the part of government in how it views Muslim representation. This is reflected in a greater recognition that reliance on a small group of 'leaders' does not necessarily connect government to the diverse range of Muslim communities in Britain, or to the kinds of expertise needed to address particular policy issues. This has led to a greater diversification of Muslim participants in governance, including delegates who speak for Muslim constituencies (such as the MCB), organisations which can speak with some authority to advise on or

influence Islamic practice in Britain (such as MINAB or the Radical Middle Way), or experts with specific knowledge and experience of engagement or equalities practices (such as the many advisors working with the Home Office or DCLG who participated in our study). This has been accompanied by a greater pluralisation of Muslim civil society organisations, with the emergence of many advocacy bodies, charities, campaigning organisations and umbrella groups – at national level and locally. Accompanying this trend, there has been a maturation within many organisations, characterised by increasing levels of confidence and political literacy on the part of many Muslim civil society organisations. Nevertheless, a number of important questions remain. These include: what is the basis for Muslim inclusion within governance? Which organisations, or constellations of organisations, should be regarded as speaking for Muslim interests? And, how might inclusion within governance be rendered more transparent?

Voice

Our research points to a range of ways in which British Muslims have voiced particular claims for the recognition of distinctive aspects of Muslim identities and experiences that cannot be subsumed under ethnicity or race-based equalities frameworks alone. This has been manifested in campaigns for: religious discrimination legislation; the inclusion of religion within equalities policies; inclusion of a question on religion within the census; state support for Muslim faith schools; accommodation of Muslim religious practices within public institutions (e.g. provision of halal food in prisons or hospitals); and more recognition of and responses to Islamophobia. For many respondents in our study, the securing of a political space to articulate such claims has itself been a political struggle. It has proceeded in the face of dominant public and media discourses that have been hostile to Muslim assertiveness, as well as opposition from equalities groups to the recognition of religiously based identities and claims. The increased recognition of the significance of Muslim distinctiveness within legislation and social policy testifies to the shift in perspectives on the legitimacy of Muslim claims over the last few decades.

Impact

As we have set out here, Muslims have had substantial impact in relation to these campaigns, notably in terms of the legislative advances on the inclusion of religion within equalities and anti-discrimination measures. It is significant, however, that the symbolic politics of Muslim participation in and claims on governance remain fraught, and frequently underpinned by discourses that cast Muslims as a security threat or an aggressive minority that commands unreasonable privileges from, whilst refusing to integrate into, British society. As we note, this perception persists despite findings of several studies and surveys that Muslims in Britain identify positively with Britain and British identity, indeed embracing British identity more enthusiastically than many white Britons. As one respondent, Muhammad Abdul Aziz, reflected, Muslim achievements on this symbolic front have been much more limited:

> The one area where there hasn't been very much work done and which has been in the ascendance is the narratives part. And, in a sense, I feel I'm in the front line of those who should be blamed for this because we were so focused on legislation and winning the battles on legislation, in some ways, we lost sight of the war which was sort of building the narrative that comes with the legislation.
>
> So we won the legislation over the last ten years but, in a sense, public attitudes deteriorated over the last ten years, you know, the narrative on equality, diversity, human rights, multiculturalism, has really, really suffered in that same period in that all the legislation that we did get into place was projected out there as privileges for minority groups rather than protection for minority groups...

Building on our research findings, and looking forwards across the multiple sites of Muslim political participation explored in our study, it is clear then that this remains a key arena in which advances need to be made.

Methodological Appendix

This report presents findings from the University of Bristol *Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance* research study, conducted by the team of five co-authors from July 2010 to December 2012. The study was funded by the AHRC and ESRC UK research councils as part of their joint Religion & Society Programme.

The research began by reviewing academic literatures on contemporary governance, UK Muslim-government relations and Muslims in Britain more broadly. It was through this literature review that the research team identified three domains of public policy relating to Muslims that have been seldom studied together. These are equality, diversity and cohesion; faith sector governance; and security (including the Prevent strategy). These three policy fields provide the structure for chapters 3 to 5 in this report. The issue of Muslim representation, while not a policy field itself, was easily identified as a critical theme of debate on Muslims in governance. It serves as the topic of chapter 2. In this first phase of the project the research team decided to focus the work on the period from 1997 to present and to investigate changes and continuities between how New Labour and the coalition have approached the politics of Muslim engagement.

The next phase of the project was national research. This began with collecting a list of key national-level policy documents related to the development of the three public policy domains that had been identified. A subsection of these documents were analysed using Nvivo qualitative analysis software. Next, interviews were conducted with governance actors engaged at a national-level.

The national research was followed by local case studies in three urban areas in England: the cities of Birmingham and Leicester and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. These three areas were chosen because they have been sites of key developments of Muslim involvement in governance while also being substantially varied in terms of political context and demographic makeup. The local phase, like the national, involved a literature review on each, collecting and analysing key local policy documents, and completing interviews with key local governance actors. It also included several participant-observations of participatory governance forums and events.

The researchers completed a total of 112 interviews at national and local levels (see list on next page). Approximately half of the interviewees are Muslim participants in governance and the other half are key state and civil society actors. The interviewees include politicians, civil servants, advisors and experts, faith leaders, community activists and police. Each interview was designed to last about one to two hours, and all were recorded and transcribed. Interviewees were given the option to designate some or all of their words as anonymous, and therefore some individuals in the list have been anonymised. Interviews were semi-structured, with a set of general questions that were asked of most interviewees alongside the opportunity to tailor specific questions to the person's expertise. Most of the national interviews were conducted in 2011 and most of the local interviews conducted in 2012.

It is worth noting that the roles, affiliations or areas of expertise listed after each interviewee on the following pages are those on which we focused some of our interview questions (rather than necessarily being how the interviewees would primarily identify themselves). Similarly, the individuals we interviewed for national or local research are certainly not restricted to working at that level. Many 'national' interviewees are quite active in their local areas, while many 'local' interviewees are nationally prominent. Indeed the often close mutual influence between national and local levels has been a key finding of our study.

National Interview Participants

Mohammed Abdul Aziz – expert on equalities

Muhammad Abdul Bari – fmr MCB Secretary General

Husna Ahmad – CEO of Faith Regen Foundation

Maqsood Ahmed – fmr Senior Advisor on Faith Comms

Nazir Ahmed – first Muslim in the House of Lords (Lab)

Anas Altikriti – The Cordoba Foundation; fmr MAB Pres

Waqar Azmi – fmr Chief Diversity Advisor in Cabinet Office

Abdul Haqq Baker – STREET; fmr Chair Brixton Mosque

Ted Cantle – Community Cohesion expert; leads iCoCo

Charles Clarke – fmr MP (Lab) & Home Sec (during 7/7)

Francis Davis – advisor on faith and social enterprise

John Denham – MP (Lab); fmr Sec of State at the DCLG

Hany El-Banna[1] – co-founder and fmr Pres of Islamic Relief

Rokhsana Fiaz – Coexistence Trust; Change Institute

Paul Goodman-fmr MP (Con); ConservativeHome exec editor

Dominic Grieve – MP (Con); Attorney General

Warwick Hawkins[2] – DCLG Head of Faith Comms Engagt

Kris Hopkins – MP (Con); fmr Leader of Bradford Council

Ed Husain – Quilliam co-founder; author of *The Islamist*

Humera Khan – founder member of An-Nisa Society

Sadiq Khan – MP (Lab); Shadow Lord Chancellor

Robert Lambert – fmr Muslim Contact Unit, Met Police

Fiona Mactaggart – MP (Lab); fmr Equalities Under-Sec

Nahid Majid – regeneration; PET governance group

Alveena Malik – formerly at Young Foundation & iCoCo

Munira Mirza – London Deputy Mayor for Ed & Culture

Fiyaz Mughal – Director of Faith Matters; fmr Lib Dem Cllr

Farooq Murad – MCB Secretary General

Fuad Nahdi – Radical Middle Way & Q-News

Trevor Phillips – fmr Chair of EHRC (and CRE)

David Rayner – fmr Sec of Inner Cities Religious Council

Iqbal Sacranie – former MCB Secretary General; UKACIA

Jack Straw – MP (Lab); fmr Home Sec & Foreign Sec

Andrew Stunell – MP (LD); fmr DCLG Under-Sec of State

Stephen Timms – MP (Lab); Vice Chair for Faith Groups

Guy Wilkinson – Near Neighbours; Inter-Religious Affairs

Rowan Williams – fmr Archbishop of Canterbury

'Conservative London politician'

'Conservative Muslim MP'

'Senior civil servant at the DCLG'

'Senior civil servant at the OSCT 1'

'Senior civil servant at the OSCT 2'

Local Interview Participants

Birmingham

Waqar Ahmed – Prevent manager, Bham CC

Marcus Beale – Asst Chf Constable, West Midlands Police

John Cotton – Councillor (Lab) Shard End; Coh/Eq Lead, BCC

Jessica Foster – Near Neighbours Coordinator

Cheryl Garvey – External Relations Manager, BRAP

Satpal Hira – Community Cohesion Team, Bham CC

Steve Jolly – campaigner against Project Champion

Naz Koser – Ulfah Arts

Jahan Mahmood – community activist

Surjeet Manku – Chf Superintendent W Midlands Police

Laura Zahra McDonald – academic; community activist

Youssif Meah – Chief Executive Director, RecoRa Institute

Jarrar Mughal – MPAC, campaigner agnst Project Champion

Raj Rattu – Business Manager, Lozells Methodist Ctr

Saidul Haque Saeed – Com Organiser, Citizens UK Birm

Andrew Smith – Dir Interfaith Relns; Faithful N'hoods Ctr

David Urquhart – Bishop of Birmingham; Soc Inclusion Process

Waseem Zaffar – Cllr (Lab) Lozells & E Handsworth

[1] Abdurahman Sharif (Muslim Charities Forum) was also present at this interview and contributed valuable expertise.

[2] Rehan Haidar (DCLG) was also present at this interview and contributed valuable expertise.

Leicester

Maqsood Ahmed[3] – inter-faith work in Leicester

Sughra Ahmed – Policy Research Centre at Islamic Foundation

Fozia Bora – academic; MIHE; fmr Q-News features editor

Cathy Carter – Leicester Partnerships Team at Leicester LSP

Jawaahir Daahir – Somali Development Services

Mohammed Dawood - Councillr (Lab) Spinney Hills; cohesn

John Hall – Director St Philip's Ctr; Diocesan inter-faith relats

Dilwar Hussain – Head Policy Research Ctr; President ISB

Mustafa Kamal – Councillor (Lab) Stoneygate

Irene Kszyk – Head of Equalities at Leicester City Council

Mohammed Ashraf Makadam – Chair of FMO Leicester

Jasbir Mann – Leicester City Council; cohesion work

John McCallum – Near Neighbours, at St Philip's Centre

Ibrahim Mogra – religious leader; prominent in inter-faith

Asif Mohammed – police community support officer

Suleiman Nagdi – FMO PR officer; advisor to police

Rob Nixon – Chf Superintendent Leicestershire Constabulary

Riaz Ravat – Faith Training Develpmt Mgr at St. Phillip's C

Patricia Roberts-Thomson – lead LCC officer for cohesion

Ataullah Siddiqui – Markfield Institute for Higher Ed (MIHE)

Tim Stevens – Bishop of Leicester; convenes Faith Ldrs Forum

Hussein Ismail Suleman – fmr Councillor (LD) Stoneygate

Batool Toma – Education Officer at Islamic Foundation

'Labour Muslim Councillor'

'Senior local journalist'

Tower Hamlets

Azad Ali – Muslim Safety Forum; iEngage; ELM

Hormuz Ali – Brick Lane Mosque; Bangladeshi Welfare Assoc

Ruhana Ali – TELCO Comm Organiser, Citizens UK

John Biggs – London Assembly Member (Lab); fmr council leader

Timothy Clapton – Near Neighbours, Contextual Theol Ctr

Abdullah Faliq – The Cordoba Foundation; ELM

Peter Golds – Cllr Blackwall & Cubitt Town; Ldr of Con Grp

Alan Green – Chair of TH Inter Faith Forum; fmr Area Dean

Abdi Hassan – Ocean Somali Community Association

Nojmul Hussain – Prevent Manager for Tower Hamlets

Neil Jameson – Chief Exec & Lead Organiser, Citizens UK

Ted Jeory – journalist for *Sunday Express*; 'Trial by Jeory' blog

Frances Jones – Service Manager at One Tower Hamlets

Michael Keith – academic; fmr council leader (Labour)

Dilowar Khan – Exec Director ELM; President of IFE

Rania Khan – Councillor (Independent) Bromley by Bow

Shaynul Khan – Asst Exec Director East London Mosque

Zakir Khan – Canary Wharf Grp; 2010 Con candidate for MP

Shiria Khatun – Councillor (Lab) East India & Lansbury

Abdul-Rehman Malik – Radical Middle Way; journalist

Adrian Newman – Bishop of Stepney; Fairness Commission

Lutfur Rahman – Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Mizan Raja – Canary Wharf Muslim Assoc; Islamic Circles

Rachael Saunders – Councillor (Lab) Mile End East

Leon Silver – President, East London Central Synagogue

Mushfique Uddin – Chief Executive, Ebrahim College

Ansar Ullah – Swadhinata Trust; secular Bengali activist

Nurul Ullah – youth crime reduction, Darul Ummah Mosque

[3] Maqsood Ahmed took part in two interviews, first on national-level developments (1/2/2011) and later on Leicester (3/4/2012).